

Ethiopian smashes record by five seconds

Duncan Mackay in Rome

FIREWORKS in celebration of another remarkable performance by the Ethiopian runner, Haile Gebrselassie, at the Blaxkings-Royal Stadium last night. The tiny Ethiopian kept the promise he made nine months ago to win the 10,000m world record, establishing himself as the 10,000m world champion.

That took 31.98sec. Keeney Paul Terrence, who set the previous record of 32.01sec, was beaten by five seconds.

The Olympic champion, who won the 10,000m at the 1996 Atlanta Games, was the first to congratulate Gebrselassie, but as they shook hands, Gebrselassie told him: "I shall remain in the lead."

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He had prepared himself for this race, and he was not disappointed. He was the first to congratulate Gebrselassie, but as they shook hands, Gebrselassie told him: "I shall remain in the lead."

Meeting report page 1

Wednesday June 3 1998

Abu Dhabi 03.50
Alaska 04.20
Amman 04.30
Athens 04.40
Auckland 04.50
Baghdad 05.00
Bangkok 05.10
Beijing 05.20
Buenos Aires 05.30
Cairo 05.40
Chengdu 05.50
Columbus 06.00
Dallas 06.10
Denver 06.20
Detroit 06.30
Frankfurt 06.40
Geneva 06.50
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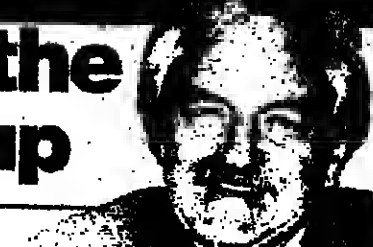
The Guardian

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Why Woody is wielding the axe

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Duncan Campbell

Cocaine farmers of the Andes

Society, G2 pages 12/13

On trial: a system that makes QCs rich

Clare Dyer
Legal Correspondent

BITAIN'S highest court, the House of Lords, is to hold an unprecedented inquiry into the size of barristers' criminal legal aid fees after a senior official refused for the first time to authorise payments for four leading QCs.

The four include Michael Mansfield, the left-wing barrister who is a media regular, notably on programmes such as Radio 4's *The Moral Maze*.

The clerk to the Parliament, Michael Davies, refused to sanction payments because he felt the fees were too high, even though in three of the four cases the original sums had already been slashed by another official, in some cases by nearly half. Fees in the fourth case are expected to suffer a similar fate, but the process has not yet been completed.

The four — the others are Christopher Sallion, Peter Feinberg and Richard Henriques — have instructed a fellow QC, James Munby, to defend the fees they claimed for appeals which went to the Lords last year.

The Bar Council regards the case as so important it has instructed Sydney Kentridge, the most sought-after advocate at the Bar, to represent the profession's interests.

The inquiry, to be held in public before five Law Lords on June 17 and 18, could result in a large drop in criminal QCs' earnings — now £300,000 a year or more for the top silks — by bringing them into line with other professionals paid from public funds.

Mr Henriques had the league table of QCs' earnings from legal aid in 1995-96, with more than £500,000, though he later said this related to more than one year.

Mr Feinberg featured in the 1996-97 top 20, released in April, with earnings between £250,000 and £300,000.

Mr Sallion is a former chairman of the Bar Council's public affairs committee and Mr Mansfield made his name in high-profile miscarriages of justice cases.

The Law Lords will consider for the first time whether barristers' legal aid fees should be linked to the going rate for private work, or be based on a reasonable income for a public service professional who is not a lawyer but with comparable skills. At the moment top QCs earn considerably more than any other profession paid from public funds, including the judges who hear their cases.

Hospital consultants, who earn a maximum of just over £110,000 with a top merit award, are the obvious comparators. Barristers' earnings would have to be adjusted for the fact that, as self-employed practitioners, they have to pay chambers expenses and make their own pension provision — bringing the comparable maximum to about £175,000.

The Law Society, which has been asked if it wants to be represented, will put in written submissions supporting the move. Russell Wallman, head of policy, said: "This is a festering sore in the legal aid system, so I'd be very pleased if the Law Lords grasped the nettle."

"We think a fairly reasonable experienced lawyer might earn the same as a GP and the very best — barrister or solicitor — the same as a top hospital consultant."

The Bar's chairman, Heather Hallett, refused to comment, saying the matter was subjective.

Mr Sallion won the release of Philip English, who was convicted of murder under the "joint enterprise" doctrine when his friend had wielded the weapon. He said he had claimed £33,000 which had been cut to £23,000 by James Vallance White, who provisionally assesses House of Lords bills. Mr Davies had then written to him to say he felt the fee was too high.

Mr Sallion said: "I'm prepared to take what I'm given but I would feel it very unfair to be criticised for asking for a sum where there is absolutely no guidance on how you should submit your bill."

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The most secret crime

This is a story we are not supposed to tell. It is about a man named Colin Smart, who spent his working life in local government looking after children, and who rose in the early 1990s to become the Director of Social Services for the city of Sunderland. He came across something that worried him a great deal: the abuse of children. He made a fuss about it and somehow, in the midst of that fuss, he ended up taking early retirement.

Colin Smart, however, is not allowed to tell his story, because shortly after he retired, his former employers took him to the High Court where, under threat of losing his pension and paying out a fortune in damages, he signed an undertaking never to speak publicly about what he knew.

In part two of his major investigation into paedophilia, award-winning journalist Nick Davies, with the help of others who have been involved, has pieced together most of what happened. He tells that alarming story on page 4.



Gordon Brown, angered unions and the Labour left yesterday

Brown toughs out cash row

Ewen MacAskill and Larry Elliott

THE Chancellor, Gordon Brown, outraged unions and the Labour left yesterday when he signalled he will keep the straitjacket on public spending in place until the next general election.

His speech was aimed at bosing down Cabinet colleagues who had expected the two-year lid on public spending to be relaxed this July. They were dismayed to find it is to be extended for a further two to three years.

Mr Brown's determination to maintain his iron Chancellor image will mean public sector workers are likely to receive only modest increases over the next few years.

Although education and health are expected to receive more cash to fulfil manifesto pledges, tight spending limits will mean other departments, such as defence, face serious cuts, forcing a sale of assets.

Mr Brown, confirming his hard line, said: "Those who said that we would fail to show the necessary discipline in public spending have been proved wrong. And discipline is not for one or two years, but must be locked in and continuous so that we can build the platform of stability upon which prosperity depends."

Before coming to power, Labour wrongfooted the Conservatives by saying it would accept their stringent spending plans for two years: £264.1 billion in 1997/8 and £274.9 billion in 1998/9.



Austin

The proof of Mr Brown's determination to be tightfisted will come in July when he announces the figure for 1999/2000, marking the end of the angst-filled departmental spending review being carried out by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Alistair Darling.

Mr Brown told a conference in London: "I am determined to ensure that we not only balance the current budget over the economic cycle but that we achieve current surpluses every year for the rest of the Parliament."

He met a delegation from the Trades Union Congress yesterday, including Rodney Bickerstaffe, general secretary of the public services union Unison, who protested: "It is no use having a surplus if we still have long hospital waiting lists, large class sizes and teachers, nurses and doctors voting with their feet by leaving their service."

Doug McAvey, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said: "This will come as a disappointment to teachers and parents who recognise the shortages in our schools, particularly the need to recruit more teachers."

The mood among Labour MPs ranged from loyalists who expressed scepticism, claiming that Mr Brown would talk tough while quietly relaxing spending, to leftwingers who were openly critical.

Alan Simpson, secretary of the leftwing Campaign Group, said: "Sticking to dogma with tight monetarism is a dubious virtue for a Britain hovering on the edge of recession."

Before singing the praises of staying on course and on time, we should remember that so was the Titanic."

The Liberal Democrats accused Mr Brown of "fiscal flagellation" while Francis Maude, the new shadow chancellor, promised support if he stuck to tight spending limits but suspected he would engage in a smoke and mirrors exercise.

Mr Brown said he will stick to rules he has already set out on achieving balance in the economy and "whatever the pressures or difficulties, we will not be diverted from these tough rules."

Government spending is divided into two — current spending on wages and departmental running costs, and capital spending which includes roads, hospitals and schools.

According to the Chancellor, Labour should borrow money only for capital spending, with current spending governed by the Treasury's so-called golden rule of public finance.

This states that all non-investment spending should be balanced over the economic cycle by revenues coming in from taxation and other charges.

However, because the recession of the early 1990s resulted in several years of hefty current deficits, Mr Brown will have to run current surpluses over the next few years in order to meet the golden rule.

Even in 1996/7 — the fifth year of economic recovery — the Government ran a current deficit of £2.2 billion, and only just broke even last year.

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Mandarin loses Brown battle, page 2

The brothers Snow fall out over mother (again)

Rory Carroll

JON SNOW, the Channel 4 newscaster famed for straight-talking integrity, last night reopened family wounds over the treatment of his mother who is suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

In a high-profile speech to royalty and charity workers today Mr Snow, aged 50, plans to say he was "dreadfully" guilt-ridden by having put his career before his mother.

"It's bollocks," said Tom Snow, his brother. "How could he have felt that guilt? There was no question of any of us being able to look after her. We're all delighted the way things worked out. Our mother is happy and receiving fantastic care."

He said the newscaster shared the family's relief and joy that their mother had found happiness over the past six years in an Oxfordshire home.

Jon Snow yesterday confirmed advance publicity for today's speech in which he confessed feeling culpable about his 87-year-old mother, Joan.

Searching for a home was a terrible and traumatic experience. In his speech, Mr Snow will say: "It was her neighbours, both much older than my mother, who bore the brunt of what was happening to her. At first they were desperate to help her stay where she was, in her own home. Finally, after a succession of chaotic adventures, we decided she would have to move."

Oblivious to her true condition, he and his family set out to find homes in beautiful surroundings for her. They were hampered by a lack of information.

He will tell the conference: "We came up with two wonderful homes. She was out of the first in a night and out of the second in two."

"She finished up incarcerated in Poole General Hospital on drugs. The geriatricians said we had to have her out of hospital and housed in a fortnight."

"I was ruthless in my refusal to make sacrifices to care for her. Guilt wrestled with reality, as each of her sons trudged across Britain in search of a viable old people's home."

"All over the country we met similar sons and daughters facing similar conflicts. The smell of incontinence battling with detergents hung in my nostrils after the day's researches were over."

"What to do with our parents is the dark side of turn to page 2, column 3"

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Sketch

In the bullring with Sir Bernard



Simon Hoggart

PEOPLE are often edgy before they appear in front of select committees, so while we waited I asked Sir Bernard Ingham if he was nervous. "No," he shouted. "Why should I be?" And he was right. It was the members of the Public Administration Committee who ought to have been quaking. Sir Bernard set about them with a will.

His face was red, and it jutted aggressively forward. Sometimes his nose almost hit the desk in front of him, reminiscent of a bull lowering its head to charge.

He waved his arms about, like a semaphorist whose wife has just run off with a Portuguese sailor. His magnificent, rooconey eyebrows bristled independently of his facial expressions, as if they were communicating vital extra information to those who could read it. ("Help! I am a Peruvian guinea pig trapped inside Sir Bernard Ingham's forehead," perhaps.)

The point about Margaret Thatcher, for whom Sir Bernard used to work as press officer, was that it was a terrible strain just being her. Nobody could keep it up 24 hours a day. Sir Bernard took over the role of Mrs Thatcher when she was just too tired. Yesterday he played the part to perfection.

A few of the MPs, neophytes for the most part, asked why he had made a practice of being offensive about cabinet ministers during his briefings. Wasn't that dirty work? "I don't think that was dirty work. I was trying to bring some rationality to the argument," Pym (Francis Pym,

whom he once famously compared to Mrs Menzies of ITMA) had made a deeply gloomy speech. The Lobby wondered how such a man could remain in the Cabinet.

He wished he hadn't said what he did "because I got a reputation for rubbishing ministers... nowadays, ministers are systematically rubbished before they get their feet under the table."

But the MPs asked, hadn't he said some nasty things about them?

"I'm not sure they were nasty," he roared. "Ministers aren't exactly a compliment, is it?"

"Well, he was a Very Gloomy Person," Sir Bernard shot back, as if Christopher Robin had decided it was time to give Eeyore a bloody good kicking.

But the person who must have felt most unhappy at this performance was, surely, Alastair Campbell, the present spokesman at Number 10. Mr Campbell is a great admirer of Sir Bernard, regarding him as a cynosure and role model.

Sadly, the compliment is not returned. Sir Bernard raged about Mr Campbell's dependency of his facial expressions, as if they were communicating vital extra information to those who could read it. ("Help! I am a Peruvian guinea pig trapped inside Sir Bernard Ingham's forehead," perhaps.)

He stormed out of the room, his face purple, red and brown, but with a large, satisfied smile.

Later, Ann Widdecombe made her debut as Tory health spokesperson, with a ferocious, spittle-flecked attack on Frank Dobson. He didn't seem too worried. Ms Widdecombe's passionate rage is attractive in a back-bench rebel; faintly embarrassing in a shadow minister.

Review

Private pain with political garnish

Michael Billington

Love You, Too

Bush Theatre

DOUG Lucie's new play is set between the general election nights of 1992 and 1997. But it works more as a waspish comedy of modern manners in the style of his earlier Bush hits, such as *Hard Feelings* and *Progress*, than as overtly political drama: it is highly entertaining without ever forging a decisive link between private lives and public values.

Lucie presents us with four characters whose lives constantly interconnect. Ros is a go-getting estate agent whose relationship with a faintly nerdy colleague, Jim, rises and falls in the course of the Major years.

But the moral epitome of that confused, unhappy period is her best friend Shelley, who shacks up with a sincere, socialist rock-musician, Mick.

On one level, Lucie is writing about contrasting ideas of friendship: meo are always driven by a genetically-inspired competitiveness, while women have an intuitive kinship.

Ros may use Shelley like a skivvy and be jealous of her fertility, and Shelley may be a screwed-up sponger, but they share a sisterly union that survives personal treachery and the loss of their partners.

As a piece of social observation, the play is often sharp and funny. Mick has the authentic rock musician's contempt for Jim's Blairite love of such groups as Oasis and UB40. Ros, with her mobile phones and self-improvement, also views with a mixture of envy and dismay Shelley's sexual freedom and ability to erase her past. Lucie records what he sees with a mordant accuracy.

I just wish he pushed his political point more strongly. In one sense, he is writing about characters who are largely indifferent to public events. But he also implies that Shelley represents post-Thatcherite selfishness, Mick doomed socialism, and Ros and Jim the kind of disillusioned Tory yuppies who lazily drifted towards New Labour. But you feel political events are used as a decorative garnish on a play that is really about female friendship.

For all its use of election-night videos as structural bookends, somewhere inside there is a much more pungent and directly political play struggling to get out.

Mike Bradwell's production, neatly designed by Es Devlin, contains alert performances from Susannah Doyle as the mercilessly selfish Shelley, Miranda Foster as the serious Ros, Reece Dinsdale as the would-be laddish Jim and Sam Graham as the socialist guitarist, Mick.

This review appeared in some editions yesterday.

Lottery operator's announcement of big profits and pay increases prompts warning from regulator

Camelot bosses win again

Nick Hopkins

CAMELOT faced a barrage of criticism yesterday after announcing record profits of almost £81 million and big pay rises for its directors.

The National Lottery operator, chastened by the 'fat-cat' row which followed last year's accounts, stressed that more money was being channelled into good causes than ever before. But the figures staggered Church leaders and provoked MPs into renewed calls for changes to the way the lottery is run.

In an unusual step, the lottery regulator Oflot warned Camelot that its money-making days were numbered.

"If the licence was renewed tomorrow, then Camelot would not win the tender," said a spokesman. "We would choose a company which is not going to make such large profits. I don't think anybody realised just how much money could be made when



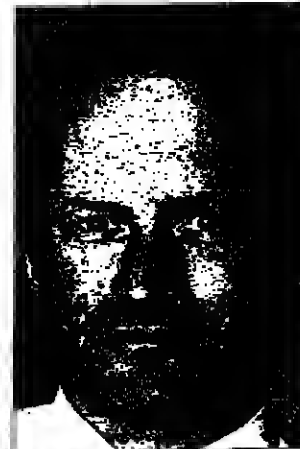
Tim Holley: Salary rose to £636,000 from £550,000

the lottery was set up. Everybody seriously underestimated its potential."

Yesterday's figures underlined the extent to which the lottery has become a cash-cow since it was introduced in November 1994. Camelot's sales topped £5 billion last year, and more than £2.7 billion

"If the licence was renewed tomorrow, then Camelot would not win the tender. We would choose a company which is not going to make such large profits"

— Oflot spokesman



Peter Murphy: Pay rose by 19 per cent, to £429,000

was handed out in prizes. The company increased the amount given to good causes by 23 per cent — to £1.56 billion — and the Treasury received £708 million from lottery duty, tax and VAT.

However, it was the overall pre-tax profit of £80.9 million, an increase of 14 per cent, and

the amounts received by senior executives, that caused consternation.

Executive directors saw their overall packages rise by between 2 and 19 per cent. Camelot chief executive Tim Holley's salary rose to £636,000, up from £550,000, and finance director Peter

Murphy's rose to £429,000 — a 19 per cent rise. Two years ago Mr Holley was earning £365,000.

David Rigg, the former communications director whose 90 per cent rise last year caused a furor, was paid £284,000. Mr Rigg resigned in September last year.

Staff have been told they will be entitled to an extra year's salary if they stay with Camelot until its licence expires in 2001 and the company hits its targets.

Camelot admitted the last 12 months had not been a complete success. Sales of instant scratchcards dropped 9 per cent to £201 million and TV Dreams, scratchcard linked to a BBC gameshow, flopped.

But Mr Murphy was bullish. "We will always be accused of making too much profit. I think our profits are absolutely reasonable. The amount of money paid to the directors is an old story."

Chris Smith, the Culture Secretary, refused to be drawn into the row. A spokesman

said Mr Smith regarded the matter as "closed", following last year's showdown with the company, which resulted in Camelot's highest earners pledging to donate some money to charity.

It was left to backbenchers to lead the attack. John Manton, a Labour member of the culture, media and sport Commons select committee, said all the money from the lottery should go to good causes and it was "mythology" to claim Camelot staff needed big salaries.

Labour MP Diana Organ said: "By the time the lottery licence comes up, most of Camelot's executives will be able to retire anyway. The salaries and bonuses they are awarding themselves are their pension plans."

The Bishop of Oxford, the Rt Rev Richard Harries, chairman of the Church of England's board for social responsibility, said: "There is a spiritual damage being done to the country by the lottery and these big profits bring this to the fore again."



Brecon Street in Liverpool, now filled with rubble, where 5,000 cobbles were stolen by thieves PHOTOGRAPH: PETER BYRNE

No road ahead — it's just been stolen

Luke Harding

IN THE grand scale of things, Brecon Street in Liverpool was a modest kind of road. Enclosed by walls, and leading nowhere in particular, the street had one distinguishing feature: its fine blue granite cobbles. Until that is, a gang with a digger pulled them up, loaded them into a wagon and drove off.

The unusual theft was discovered by mechanic Bob Barlow when he turned up at his garage premises. The thieves had left two cobbles behind — almost as a souvenir — but had taken away the other 5,000 or so that made up the 100ft by 12ft road.

"I'm gobsmacked," said Mr Barlow, who runs the MGM garage on what is now Roaler Street industrial estate. "It was just as you imagine it, a fully cobbled street. On Saturday afternoon it was there, on Monday morning it wasn't. The whole lot is gone."

"When I drove on to the estate there was no road, so I had to brake quite hard. I said to myself, 'What's going on here?' I thought the council must have been working on it — but then I thought they'd been a bit enthusiastic. Then the penny dropped and I realised someone had stolen it."

The villains are believed to have spent four hours on Sunday morning digging up the cobbles. Neighbours in the nearby Kensington housing estate heard a hit

of muffled drilling, but assumed the noise was emanating from the garage, which is part of a small, isolated industrial estate. Yesterday police were investigating a tip-off to their crimestoppers hotline and conducting door-to-door inquiries.

"We are following up a line of inquiry," a Merseyside police spokesman said cautiously. "It is too early to speak of arrests."

Officially, Brecon Street had not existed for some time. Liverpool city council yesterday said the highway had been closed in 1977, and now has the lowly status of a private road.

Mr Barlow was yesterday forced to lay rubble where the cobbles used to be in an attempt to let his business and others around him carry on trading. "It was almost certainly done to order," he said.

"The stones themselves are very expensive and weigh quite a bit so they must have been here some time taking them out. They could be worth as much as £10,000."

"I'm thinking about breaking up the two remaining bricks and selling them as mementoes. Though their rarity value could decline. There are still about 20 cobbled streets in Liverpool, virtually all of them unadopted, which could fall victim to the cobbler thieves. And such thefts are not unique. "It has happened before, though I can't say how often," according to a police spokesman.

The brothers Snow fall out over mother (again)

'I was ruthless in my refusal to make sacrifices to care for her. Guilt wrestled with reality, as we searched for a home.'

continued from page 1 society. Most of us must face it some day."

Even now he would not consider allowing his mother move into his house because coping with her Alzheimer's disease would consume time which he could not afford.

Mr Snow said his feelings had nothing to do with the controversy two years ago when he blamed his mother's coldness and lack of affection for his inability to form close relationships.

He will deliver the keynote speech this afternoon at the

annual meeting of the charity Counsel and Care. The Duchess of Gloucester and 500 charity workers will be in the audience at Church House, Westminster.

His brother, a regional officer with the health union Unison, said: "This is all middle class crap about the inner person. I've got no sympathy with the idea that this is a great occasion for guilt."

"Our mother is wonderfully cared for. We combed seven counties to find that home. It's absolutely marvellous. The whole regime is intended

to retain what vestige of normality is left. Her short-term memory is gone but she is part of the [home's] social life. It makes her more a fully human person."

He said the Channel 4 anchorman knew it was the best option.

"There's no way any of the family had the ability to look after her."

The brothers clashed two years ago when Jon Snow published a memoir, in the anthology *Mothers and Sons*, accusing his mother of being cold and undemonstrative. He

recalled his horror at the age of eight when told by his father, the Bishop of Whitchy, that his mother was bald. The revelation "undermined my confidence in who she really was," he wrote.

His brother condemned the memoir in a letter to the Guardian. "I cannot see how anything in his childhood can now justify the humiliation of our mother, whose memory of these times has been wiped out."

"It is simply pitiless. Self-indulgence has gained the upper hand over decency."



Jon Snow: family conflicts



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Bordeaux

Bordeaux

Bordeaux loses town battle

Wednesday June 3 1992
rning from regulator
again



'Any attempt to say that I was aware of these practices amounts to defamation. I have been the victim of blackmail by someone from outside the château. I have decided to let justice clarify the entire matter'

Eric Albada Jelgersma, above, owner of Château Giscours



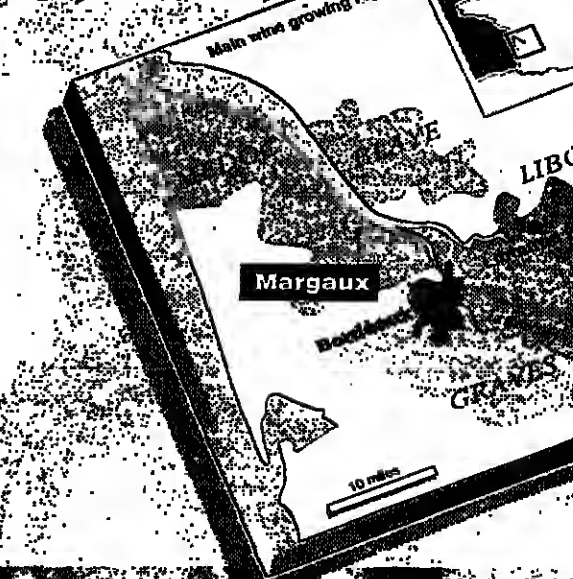
Cbâtean Giscours allegedly mixed 175,000 bottles of its 1995 vintage with sugar, water, acids and milk, as well as with wines from different years and areas

PHOTOGRAPH: BOB EDMS

Bordeaux blackmail and sour grapes

Booming Bordeaux

- In 1997 wine exports from the Bordeaux region rose by 41 per cent to 7.3bn francs (£730m).
- A young vintage Bordeaux can fetch around £100 per bottle. Older vintages can sell for over £800.
- 1995 and 1996 have been spectacularly good years. Prices are now so high that they are the most expensive young vintages in the history of the Bordeaux region.
- Main export markets: Asia, US, UK



The foreign owner of a château accused of doctoring wines has hit back, alleging a plot by locals, writes **Jon Henley** in Paris

A SCANDAL gripping the premier French wine-making region of Bordeaux took an ugly twist yesterday when the new foreign owner of a prestigious Bordeaux chateau, accused of illegally doctoring his wines, claimed he was the victim of a blackmail plot aimed at driving him out of business.

Eric Albada Jelaersma, the Dutch owner of Chateau Giscours, the home of an eminent Margaux wine that is one of the most noted *grand crus* of France, said he was alerted to the targeting by a blackmailer who threatened to reveal it to the French authorities unless he was paid a "very substantial" sum of money.

"I went personally to the consumer and office to report this, and it was at my insistence that some of the malpractice was confirmed," Mr Albada said in a statement issued through his lawyer.

"Any attempt to say that I was a aware of the lawless amounts to defamation. I have been the victim of blackmail by someone from outside the chateau. I have decided to let justice clarify the entire matter."

The scandal broke after newspaper allegations that to improve their flavour, some 176,000 bottles of the chateau's outstanding 1995 vintage had been mixed with sugar, water, acids and milk. Most beings of all, they had been mixed with wines from different years and areas.

All this is illegal in Bordeaux, where wines are subject to the strictest regulations to guarantee purity and quality.

Justice officials confirmed that "several senior employees" of the chateau are under investigation on suspicion of tampering with the wine. Among them is Jean-Glaude former director, Jean-Michel Fernandez, and its chief wine expert, Régis Froidefond. Officials said they had formally been named targets of a criminal inquiry opened in 1996 by the Bordeaux investigating magistrate, Denis Cochin.

Officials declined to say who first alerted them to the fraud.

Mr Albada, a multi-millionaire businessman, acquired a controlling interest in the chateau in 1995 from the bitterly divided Tari family, which had owned it since the end of the second world war. He has also been questioned by the investigating magistrate.

that he had never been made welcome in the enclosed world of the Bordeaux winemakers. In a Dutch newspaper interview in 1996, he complained of being treated by other winemakers as if he were a "barbarian from the north." If his allegations are true, it seems he was disliked so much, someone tried to ruin him.

Gilles de Bollesseon, Mr Albada's lawyer, declined to name the blackmailer. "Let's just say that this is a very small world, that everyone knows each other, and that everyone knows what everyone is up to," he said.

Mr Albada was a new-comer, he bought a major *grand cru* chateau and installed new management and new equipment. It wasn't very much appreciated. Nor was the fact that, at the beginning of 'tenth, he didn't spend much time there.

Mr Albada said that in buying the chateau's production company, he saved it from financial ruin. "I paid off its debts and restored the banks' confidence in the business," he said.

"I have done everything in my power — and invested a large amount of money — to return to Giscours its former outstanding image. Any tampering with the wine would clearly be disastrous for

the wine's image and the chateau's fortunes."

He alleged the tampering had been carried out on the instructions of Mr Ferrandez who was subsequently dismissed after only four months in his job and now runs a vineyard in Lebanon.

Mr Ferrandez admitted yesterday to mixing wine from the Haut-Médoc appellation with Margaux produced by Giscours, but said he did it to improve the final product. "This mixing had only one goal — qualitative improve-

Albada said he was treated by other winemakers as if he were a 'barbarian'

ment," Mr Ferrandez said.

The mixing amounted to at most 44 per cent of the total wine of Margaux produced by Giscours, he said, and was done because the Margaux was mediocre while the Haut-Médoc, from old-growth vines, was "nearly as good as a *grand cru* classé".

Whoever was behind the scandal, industry experts have said it could have a big

financial impact in the region. Margaux is one of the Bordeaux region's best-known red wines, which include Lafite, Emillon, Fomerol and Pauillac.

Long among the world's costliest wines, they can sell for well over £100 a bottle for a young vintage, and up to £800 for an older vintage.

Prices for 1996 and 1996 wine have consistently outstanding vintages have risen fast, helping the value of Bordeaux wine exports as a whole to soar by 41 per cent last year to £730 million. The finest Bordeaux wines have acquired almost a cult following in high-spending circles in Britain, the United States and Asia.

But a big part of Bordeaux's prestige lies in the regulations that govern its production. Unlike wines from many other countries, all Bordeaux wine must be made under the Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) wines carrying the name of a château must be made from grapes from its vineyards. The entire wine-making process, down to the bottling, must take place on the premises.

"I hope there is no real problem there, but we must absolutely get to the bottom of this," said Philippe Casteja, president of the Bordeaux Wine Council.

Wine prices must be cleared up very quickly.

Mandarin loses Brown battle

Ann Perkins
Political Correspondent

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has finally won his battle to ease out the top Treasury mandarins with whom he has been in conflict for more than a year.

Sir Terence Burns, aged 54, the permanent secretary Gordon Brown inherited from the Tories, will retire early with a peerage later this month.

He will become the first Treasury permanent secretary to go to the Lords in that time when he is promoted. Queen's birthday honours list in a fortnight's time. This is a reward usually reserved for the Cabinet Secretary.

Sir Terence will be replaced by an old Treasury hand, Andrew Turnbull, aged 53, who is permanent secretary at John Prescott's superministry, the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR).

It has been an open secret in Whitehall for months that the Chancellor and Sir Terence have been at loggerheads over a host of issues, including the advice Sir Terence gave Geoffrey Robinson, the Paymaster General, over his offshore trust, as well as a £50,000 tax-exempt sale of on-individual Savings Accounts and negotiations with the rest of Europe on the single currency.

Sir Terence's critics claim he was fatally wounded from the start of the Labour Gov-

Taxpayers' extra £300m to fund Channel Tunnel rail link

Keith Harper
Transport Editor

THE Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, last night ruled that the taxpayers' extra cost in funding the Channel Tunnel rail link could not exceed £300 million in a bid to protect today's deadweight building the first part of the 38-mile route between London and Folkestone.

Mr Prescott told the route's new backers that the Government was only prepared to add £300 million to the taxpayers' contribution of £1.2 billion towards the £5.4 billion project. It will be spread over 10 years.

The message was delivered during tough negotiations to the main participants. Railtrack has promised to put up the money to build the first stage of the link to Ebbsfleet, in Kent. Two bidders, Virgin and a consortium led by British Airways and National Express, are competing to take over the long-making Eurostar service between London, Paris and Brussels.

The bidders want the Government to bear Eurostar's losses, running at £180 million a year, but Mr Prescott insisted the losses would have to be borne by all partners.

It is not expected the Eurostar project will break even until 2001 at the earliest, so the successful bidder will have to accept some of the losses, expected to be around £200 million.

Under the deal, London and

Continental Railways, the rail link's troubled sponsor, will receive financial backing to build the link from Railtrack, with work starting later this year.

Sources close to Mr Prescott last night rejected suggestions that the extra £300 million would have to come from the transport budget. They said money to fund other public transport improvements would not be sacrificed.

Friends of the Earth said that while it wanted the link, improved bus lanes, bike routes and new tramways should not be sacrificed. "Mr Prescott must not end up like Old Mother Hubbard because he has blown all his money on the rail link," the pressure group declared.

Mr Prescott will present the hard-won compromise as a "radical" departure for transport, combining the expertise

The Chunnel rail link

The map shows the route of the Chunnel rail link from St Pancras in London to Ebbsfleet in Kent. The route is marked with a line and includes the following locations: St Pancras, Stratford, Watlington, and Ebbsfleet. A scale bar indicates 50 miles. The map also shows the River Thames and the M25 motorway. A label 'Stage 2' is placed near Ebbsfleet. A note at the bottom left states: 'Existing south London rail links used by the Eurostar'. The word 'KENT' is written in large letters at the bottom right.

St Pancras
Stratford
Watlington
Ebbsfleet

Existing south London rail links used by the Eurostar

KENT

50 miles


of the private and public sectors.

He is likely to promise improved services once the first section of the rail link is built, including a reduction of 15 minutes in the three hour journey between London and Paris.

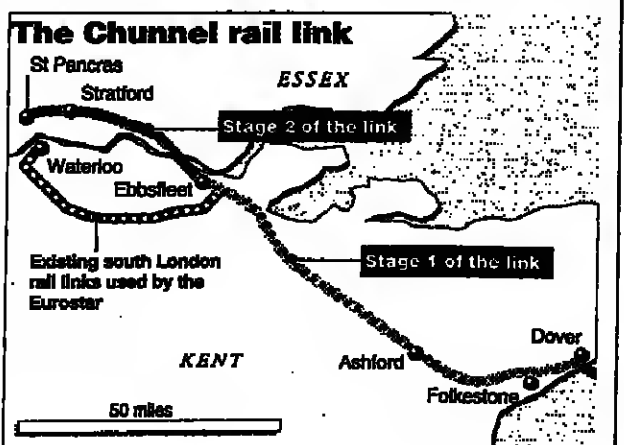
But the compromise has been forced on the Government through the failure of the private sector to get City backing. Only the first stage of the link is to be built initially. The final, more difficult stage from the M25 to St Pancras will have to wait.

If BA wins the bid for Eurostar, it would reduce its initial commitment to 10 per cent of the stake, a calculated move to assuage competitors like Air France, which is bound to argue that BA gets an unfair advantage.

Off the rails, page 10



The map shows the coastline of southern England. A line representing the rail link starts at Ashford and runs southwards. A label 'Stage 1 of the link' points to this section. Further south, the line continues towards Dover. Folkestone is marked on the coast between Ashford and Dover. The word 'SEX' is written vertically on the left side of the map.



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The NSPCC team bluntly named 23 men and women who had been identified to them as abusers at Witherwack during the 1970s and 1980s

The most
abuse

**The
most
secret
crime**

Guilty . . . Care workers Kevin Roffe and Glynis Tamblin who received suspended sentences of 12 months each

PHOTOGRAPHS: MIKE SCOTT

them, what his team had discovered; and then he went right to the top — to the De-

Subject to availability

صَبَّحْنَا مِنَ الْإِصْحَارِ

Guardian Wednesday June 3 1998
team bluntly named women who had ed to them as Witherwack during and 1980s

r the



The Guardian Wednesday June 3 1998

The most secret crime

abused and was gagged

The police had stopped their inquiries. The council stopped theirs. No one was blamed. And Colin Smart could not even open his mouth to complain

partment of Health in London to ask for the Social Services Inspectorate to mount a special and urgent inquiry into Witherwack and other homes in Sunderland.

These decisions, according to a senior figure, provoked an undeclared war in the city council, with some councillors and officials now colluding to find a way to remove Smart from his job. There was nothing discreet about some of the fighting. At one point, a councillor distributed around the building some beer mats which were supposed to promote a campaign against drinking and driving; the councillor had scratched out the message and left only the headline slogan — "Get Smart".

As soon as he had found out about the regime of violence at Witherwack, Smart had ordered it to stop. But as the weeks went by, Smart was informed that the violence in Witherwack had not ended. Indeed, the evidence was that it had got worse. Furthermore, he was told that after he had instructed staff to change the regime, the home had been told behind his back and without proper authority to carry on as before.

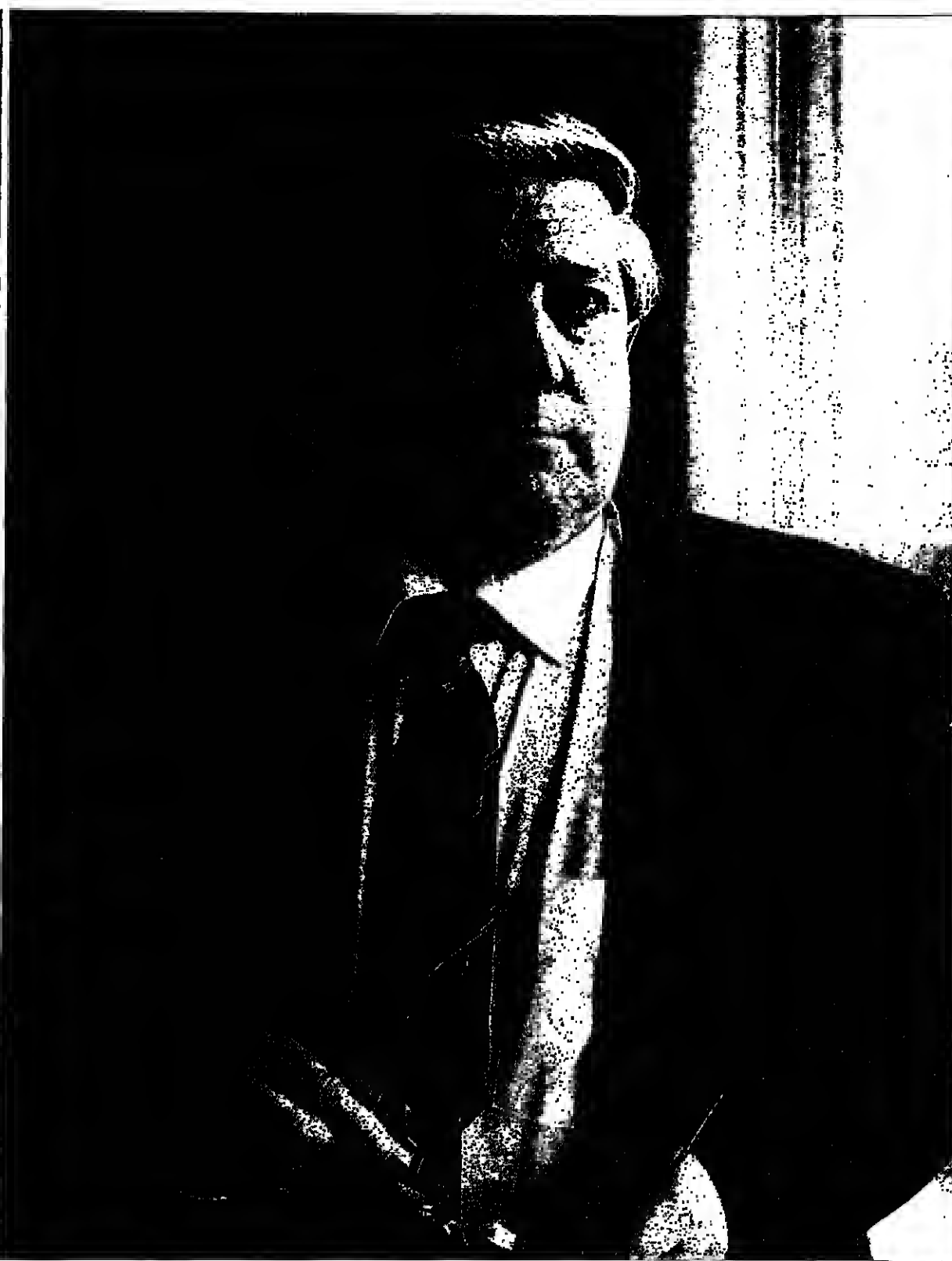
Smart told his team to travel

ing, of incomplete records, poor buildings and weak management.

Eight months later, Smart wrote an article for the Guardian, headlined *Kids in Crisis*, in which he disclosed none of the facts about Sunderland but expressed the feelings of a man who had spent his career in a system which, he now believed, was damaging the very people it was supposed to be helping. "It is debatable," he wrote, "whether the majority of children now in residential care have been more harmed by the circumstances which brought them into the system, or by their time with social services."

Having reached this point of despair, Smart had no moral alternative but to fight on. He took his long list of possible victims and abusers to the chief executive. He took, too, a short list of named individuals whose continued interference in council business, he argued, would mean that children in the city's care would never be free of abuse — not because they themselves were child abusers but simply because they were playing politics with the welfare of the children.

And he issued an ultimatum: the council must re-investigate his long list of worrying inci-



Silenced... Colin Smart was sued by his ex-employer Sunderland City Council

PHOTOGRAPH: PAUL DIXON

The NSPCC found that a care worker had had sex with a girl aged 14

The most secret crime

Staff incited an older boy called Darren Rowe to rape other children

The most secret crime

back through the files to see whether there were any other signs of unchecked abuse — unexplained injuries, or unresolved complaints or any pattern of allegation around any particular care worker.

In the meantime, he had the police — led by an outstanding detective named David Wilson — and the Social Services Inspectorate digging out the truth. Towards the end of the year, the SSI produced a first draft of their report in which they confirmed that Witherwack House had been running "a repressive regime" with "inappropriate and high levels of physical restraint and a failure to protect children from abuse". It added: "Inspectors read on file and were told by children of a number of incidents where restraint seemed to border on assault."

A month later, at the end of January 1993, Smart's small team reported back to him the results of their general trawl through the files. The result was devastating. They had found signs of systematic mismanagement, of consistent failure to heed complaints and they had produced a list of suspicious incidents which had apparently not been handled properly. It covered just about every children's home in the city, it identified more than 50 girls and boys as possible victims of physical and sexual violence and some 30 staff as possible abusers. Smart had uncovered a scandal.

In their draft report, the SSI, too, had seen signs of structural weakness, complaining of the staff's inadequate training,

public statement, underlining his confidence in him. Nevertheless, shortly afterwards, for whatever reason, Wilson was moved off the inquiry.

The Social Services Inspectorate was neutralised. Their report was published and accepted in February 1993, but by then the council had commissioned its own report from a retired civil servant named Evelyn Cassam. When he published his findings in May 1992, he confirmed the problems, criticised the council's failure to deal with them but, crucially, he strongly advised the council not to dig out the history of abuse. This "picking over the bones" would be bad for morale, Cassam said, and it would distract resources away from current abuse. The most that they might do, he suggested, was to set up a hotline. Following his advice, the council stopped all attempts to dig out the truth. Ignoring his ad-

vice, they did not set up a hotline.

Colin Smart, however, did not give up. At home in the autumn of 1992, he prepared his own five-volume report and in December he sent them off to the police, the SSI, the Department of Health and the Secretary of State, who was then Virginia Bottomley.

Mrs Bottomley wrote back to thank him. Smart passed a message to the council to say that he would be happy to discuss the reports. Instead, they issued a writ for breach of confidence, claiming that he was using confidential information and potentially perverting the course of justice in the trial of the three care workers. They said he must surrender all of his information, undertake not to disclose it to anyone else and pay them damages.

But an internal memo about Smart, marked private and confidential, which has been seen by The Guardian, makes it clear that the council had another, rather different reason for gagging him. By this time, two former residents of Witherwack were suing the council. According to the memo to senior councillors, written by the director of administration, Colin Langley: "The solicitors acting for our insurers in respect of the claims by former residents of Witherwack are concerned about the effect upon the conduct of those cases and the implications for further claims. I have, therefore, agreed with them that High Court proceedings be taken against Mr Smart for the return of any documents and to restrain him from any further publication of council documents."

Smart went to court in March 1993, indignant that the council were using public money to keep the public in the dark. His lawyers warned the court that this was a perversion of the course of justice. The judge hesitated and the two sides struck a deal. Smart would hand over his information and sign an undertaking not to discuss publicly what he knew; the council would drop their demand for damages and let him off with paying £5,000 towards their costs. Smart was now gagged. A couple of opposition councillors called it a cover-up. So did the Sunderland Echo. The council were unmoved.

One small part of the truth was revealed in October 1993, when the three sacked workers from Witherwack finally found themselves in the dock. The court heard how staff had given the children "speedies" (knuckle-punches to the head) and power punches to the body, how they had made them run a gauntlet of kicks and

the accused was acquitted but the other two care workers, Kevin Roffe and Glyndis Tammelin, were convicted and given suspended sentences of 12 months each. And that was it. If the judge wanted to know why the council had concealed this crime for three years and allowed the poor conditions to persist so long, no one was about to tell him.

It was not that the council did nothing. The new director of Social Services acted on just about every recommendation that was made to him. Nevertheless, the council left the dark heart — the history of child abuse in their homes — untouched. The SSI were long gone (and several of their inspectors were now working for the council). The police had stopped their inquiries. The council had stopped theirs. No one was blamed. And Colin Smart could not even open his mouth to complain.

There was, however, just one loose end. The children. By now, they had grown up. Some had found work and settled down. Others had bounced from one kind of trouble to another: one wing of Wakefield Prison housed three former residents of Witherwack. None of them had forgotten. Some of them had tried, but none of them had succeeded. And every so often, one of them would feel a surge of pain and go to the police to make a statement or to a lawyer to make a claim for compensation. The police would make inquiries and say there was not enough evidence. The law-

up a hotline for survivors. They went out into the street and gathered signatures. They marched on the city hall. They set up more legal actions.

One quiet night, a small group of them turned up on Colin Smart's doorstep and asked for his help. Even though he was gagged, he agreed to write to the Secretary of State.

The council resisted. The new director of Social Services said it had all been investigated already. The new spokesman said that children had been abused and should express their formal regret.

The City Council called a press conference at which the director of Social Services expressed his regret, albeit in limited fashion.

And Northumbria Police announced that they were reopening their inquiry into abuse at Witherwack and other homes in Sunderland. The man appointed to lead it was David Wilson, now a Detective Chief Superintendent.

Now, finally, the truth has begun to emerge. And from his place on the sidelines, Colin Smart is still watching in silence as the cover-up finally cracks.

Whistleblowers who stood up and paid with their jobs



Taff Vale... the Cardiff home where Karen McKaye demanded complaints be investigated — and lost her job

In homes across the country workers who listened to children's complaints have been ignored. But in some cases their doggedness forced official action

COVER-UP has become part of the story of child abuse, particularly in the children's homes which were swept by a wave of rape and assault during the last three decades. Over and over again, somewhere in the midst of this wave, a lonely figure would appear, yelling for help, only to be ignored or submerging by the powers that should have reached out a hand.

In North Wales, it was Alison Taylor, the manager of a children's home, who spent five years banging on the door of her employers at Gwynedd Council, the police, the Welsh Office, the Department of Health, and the Social Services Inspectorate. All turned her away. Undaunted, she com-

piled a dossier of 75 separate allegations, won the backing of two local councillors and finally secured the conviction of four men for an orgy of abuse.

As a result, the Government finally ordered the vast public inquiry which has now heard nearly 300 former residents of homes make detailed complaints of physical and sexual assault against 148 adults.

By that time, however, Alison Taylor had been suspended and sacked. In South Wales, several years later, it was Karen McKaye who was thrown out of her job after demanding that children's complaints be investigated. Her refusal to be silenced finally provoked a major police inquiry into events at the Taff Vale children's

home in Cardiff. Now, 32 other homes in the area are also being investigated. Three men are awaiting trial over alleged incidents at Taff Vale.

In relation to the other homes, in April Robert Starr was jailed for 15 years for indecent assaults, and three others have been arrested.

In Warrington, Elaine Bowerman spent a decade trying to persuade her union, Nalgo, her employers, Lancashire County Council, and the police to do something about the indecent assaults and violence which she said were being inflicted on children with learning difficulties at Massey Hall School where she worked.

She complained, for example, of the occasion when she had seen brown fluff blowing across the lawn and discovered that it was a boy's hair which had just been pulled from his head by a senior member of staff. Eventually, she went to the parents of some of the children to warn them

— and was sacked for gross misconduct.

In June 1997 Robert Boyle, aged 50, was charged with indecent assault on pupils at the school between 1982 and 1995. He was said to have handled boys' genitals in the showers. He claimed he was examining them for medical reasons. In April, he was acquitted by a jury at Warrington Crown Court.

However, the jury convicted him of lying about his past in order to get his job. When the judge sentenced him for this offence, the Crown disclosed for the first time that in 1977, Boyle had been convicted of six assaults on young boys. He had caught them stealing, the court was told, and given them a choice of being punished by the police or by himself. He had then beaten their bare backsides with a gym shoe or a baton. He had also fondled their genitals, claiming that this was for medical reasons. He had concealed this throughout his time at Massey Hall.

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Case could transform reporting on politicians

Former Irish PM
renews libel battle

Stuart Miller

ALBERT Reynolds, the former Irish prime minister, yesterday renewed his long-running legal battle with the Sunday Times in a case which could transform the ability of the British media to cover the activities of politicians.

Mr Reynolds went to the Court of Appeal after a 1996 High Court verdict left him facing huge legal bills even though the jury found he had been libelled by a story published in 1994 in the wake of the collapse of his Fianna Fail-Labour coalition government.

Under the headline, Goodbye Gombeo man: Why a fib too far proved fatal, the Sunday Times accused Mr Reynolds of misleading the Dail and lying to his Labour colleagues.

Although the jury found he had been libelled, it ruled that he was not entitled to damages because the paper had acted maliciously. It had simply repeated allegations made in the Irish parliament.

As the paper had already paid £5,000 into court to settle the dispute, Mr Reynolds was ordered to pay his own costs up until the time the payment

was made, and the costs of the Sunday Times after that date.

Mr Reynolds claims that the High Court judge, Mr Justice French, who upped the jury's "zero damages" award to £1, was "confusing and unstructured" in his summing up to the jury.

But the Sunday Times is cross-applying, claiming the article was in the public interest and published in good faith and should therefore be protected by the rule of qualified privilege.

Lord Lester QC, for the paper, told the court yesterday that the case highlighted the need for a reinterpretation of British libel laws to protect newspapers and broadcasters who criticised politicians or other public officials — even in cases such as this where the stories proved erroneous.

"The media needs to be able to err, to make mistakes, in the interests of free speech, even though it may have the effect of damaging, even severely damaging, a public official's reputation."

The fact that the story did not involve a British politician was irrelevant, Lord Lester said. The reasons for the withdrawal of the Labour party from the Irish coalition government, leading to its collapse and the resignation of

Mr Reynolds as taoiseach and leader of Fianna Fail, "were of very considerable significance and interest in the United Kingdom" because of the critical stage of the Northern Ireland peace process.

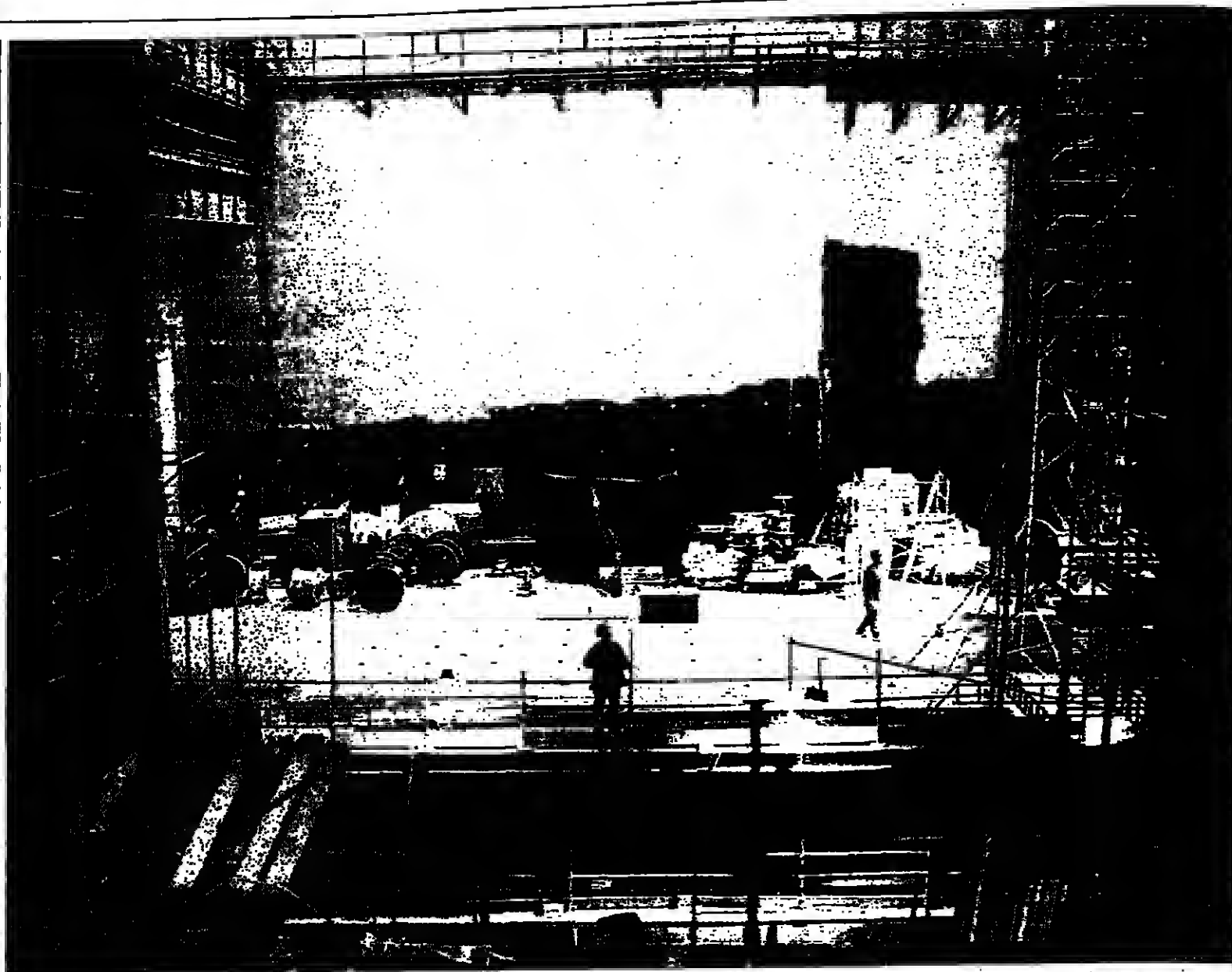
He urged the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham, Lord Justice Hirst and Lord Justice Robert Walker to extend the existing law of qualified privilege to give the right to free expression of political discussion in the media priority over the protection of politicians' reputations.

The protection should not cover stories about the personal lives of politicians or senior public officials, nor should it be expanded to cover a wider definition of public figures, such as pop stars or sports celebrities.

He accepted that an extension of the qualified privilege would prevent public officials from challenging inaccurate stories about their public lives unless they could prove they were published out of malice or recklessness.

But he added: "Politicians, unlike ordinary people, also have the possibility of putting their case across in the media themselves. They also have the Press Complaints Commission so they are not completely without remedies."

The case continues today.



Workmen began the final stage yesterday of a two-year, £48 million refurbishment of Sadler's Wells, home of the Royal Ballet, in Islington, north London, which is expected to reopen in October with a programme including performances by the Rambert Dance Company. PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

Padre cleared of sex charge



Richard Landall, who broke down in tears after being cleared of indecent assault, and (left) Shelly Brazier, who had earlier withdrawn allegations of harassment against him. PHOTOGRAPH: SCOTT MONTGOMERY

News in brief

Vinnie Jones found
guilty of assault

FOOTBALLER Vinnie Jones was yesterday found guilty of assault causing actual bodily harm and criminal damage after a late night attack on neighbour Timothy Gear, aged 27, last November. The 35-year-old Queens Park Rangers and Wales star, of Redbourn, Hertfordshire, had denied punching, kicking and biting Mr Gear at his mobile home following a row over a stifle. Magistrates at St Albans, Herts, adjourned sentencing for reports until July 2. Jones, who is on bail, left court without commenting, accompanied by his wife, Tanya, and agent, Nick Davies. Mr Gear's mother, Gillian, said the family did not wish to discuss the case until after sentencing.

Smoking 'worse than cocaine'

MOTHERS who smoke cause more death and damage to unborn babies and young children than those who take cocaine, according to an American scientist.

Theodore Slotkin, a pharmacologist from America's Duke University in North Carolina, criticised the media and medical establishment for failing to wake up to the evidence of serious harm caused by maternal smoking. Writing in the Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics, he said smoking by a quarter of all pregnant women probably produced far more damage than the "timed and episodic" use of cocaine.

Animal studies had shown that nicotine inflicted serious damage on the foetus even at levels too low to cause low birth weight. Illicit drugs accounted for only a handful of deaths in the United States each year, he said, but tobacco killed 400,000.

Lawrence suspects in aid plea

FOUR of the five men facing questions about the racist killing of Stephen Lawrence have been refused legal aid to challenge summonses to attend the public inquiry into the murder on Monday. Gary Dobson, aged 22, has lodged an appeal, which will be heard on Monday. His solicitor, Michael Holmes, said he wanted to go to the High Court to have the summons annulled to prevent his client being put "on trial". Dobson, Neil Acourt, aged 23, and Luke Knight, 20, were acquitted of the murder at the Old Bailey in 1999. Charges against Jamie Acourt and David Norris, both 21, never came to court. The Legal Aid Board does not make public its reasons for refusing aid, but applications have to satisfy a means test and test on the merits of the case. — David Pallister

'Jury' attacks genetic food

SUSPICION over the introduction of genetically modified foods was expressed yesterday by a "citizens' jury", which demanded segregation from unmodified foods and clear labelling. Twelve people, selected randomly from a council ward whose political complexion mirrored last year's general election results, spent 30 hours at a pub in Brighton questioning witnesses from the food industry in an experiment sponsored by the Consumers' Association, the Genetics Forum and Sainsbury's. They condemned "unnecessary reliance" on artificial fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides and called for the Common Agriculture Policy to give more aid to organic farmers. They accused food and chemical companies of acting in a "covert and secretive manner" over genetic modification and taking advantage of weak controls by the European Union and Britain. They called for a big public education programme over GM organisms. — James Melkie



Jamie Wilson

THE first army chaplain to appear at a court martial was cleared yesterday of indecently assaulting a soldier's wife.

Captain Richard Landall, aged 41, broke down in tears after being returned his belt and cap and marching stiffly out of the courtroom at the end of the 10 day hearing.

A panel of five senior officers took just under two hours to reach its verdict at the court martial in Aldershot, Hampshire.

The alleged victim, a woman aged 24 who cannot be named, for legal reasons, had claimed Capt Landall groped her breast at a party, put his hand down her trousers, rubbed his groin against her and forcibly kissed her on the

lips. After his acquittal the chaplain said: "I thank God justice has been done. I have prayed the truth would come out. Just why these accusations were made I will never know. This has been an impossibly difficult time not only for myself but also for my children, my family and my friends."

On Monday the military court heard that the woman had negotiated to sell her story to the News of the World for up to £15,000 since giving evidence.

After being recalled to the court from Germany she at first denied any sum of money had been agreed, but later admitted signing a contract with the newspaper after she and her husband were taken to a hotel by two reporters.

A friend of the woman told the hearing that she had

heard the couple discuss selling the story to the press before the court martial began.

Capt Landall, based at the 2nd Battalion Royal Regiment of Fusiliers base in Celle, Germany, at the time of the alleged offences in November last year, had told the hearing: "My job is the most important thing in my life and I have been stopped from doing it for six months. It's like cutting the oxygen off."

He admitted he was flirtatious with soldier's wives, but added: "I'm a flirt, not a pervert."

His wife Susan, aged 41, also gave an interview to the Sunday Mirror published during the trial which portrayed him as an overbearing, sexually demanding bully.

Brigadier David Montgomery, Capt Landall's commanding officer, had told the hearing: "If the allegations against

Khashoggi 'wrote
dud cheques'

Jamie Wilson

THE international arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi wrote worthless cheques for more than £3.2 million at the Ritz Hotel casino in Piccadilly, London, during a four day gambling spree, the High Court was told yesterday.

Mr Khashoggi is reputed to have earned much of his fortune by acting as a middleman in the sale of arms to Arab oil states. He is being sued for more than £8 million by the casino — the original debt and £5 million in interest.

The Saudi businessman, who was not in court yesterday, insists the debt is legally unenforceable because he had an arrangement with the casino's management which allowed him to continue gambling illegally on credit.

Nicholas Merriman QC, for the Ritz, said his defence was nonsense.

He told Mr Justice Ringer that the arms dealer gambled a total of £10.1 million between the end of January and April 10, 1986. "His gambling was initially successful and he won," Mr Merriman said.

"It was only in the later stages that he lost."

There was no dispute that Mr Khashoggi signed 16 cheques for £200,000 each, drawn on an account with the Swiss Banking Corporation of Geneva on three days at the end of March and on April 10. The cheques were refused on presentation because of insufficient funds.

Asked by the judge why the case had taken so long to come to court, Mr Merriman said that between 1986 and 1990 Mr Khashoggi made repeated promises to pay, but explained that he was having financial difficulties.

When finally asked to turn his attention to the dishonoured cheques he failed to do so and legal proceedings were launched.

Mr Khashoggi's defence was that he had an understanding with unnamed casino managers that his cheques would not be met on presentation because he was awaiting funds due to him.

The cheques were therefore a "sham" and non-negotiable because he was being allowed to gamble unlawfully on credit.

The case continues today.

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The Guardian

Gucci's kill
at large, co

key clamps

صوتنا من الراحل



Orazio Cicala stands in the defendants' cage in the Milan court yesterday, when he accused Patrizia Reggiani Gucci, below with her lawyer during the hearing, of paying him £50,000 to have her former husband, the fashion magnate Maurizio Gucci, murdered

Gucci's killer still at large, court told

Philip Willan in Rome

THE former wife of the murdered fashion magnate Maurizio Gucci made her first appearance in the Milan assize court yesterday to hear the alleged driver of the killer's getaway car admit his responsibility and accuse her of having commissioned the killing.

But in an unexpected twist to the trial, which began three weeks ago, Orazio Cicala, aged 59, said the suspect next to him in the defendants' cage, Benedetto Cernilo, aged 38, was not the killer.

"The crime was committed by a petty criminal whom I met when, because of my

money problems, I began dealing in drugs," he said. "The real killer is free, but I cannot name him because I have a family and children."

His 20-minute statement reinforced the prosecution case against Patrizia Reggiani Gucci.

Mr Cicala said he had met Gucci's estranged wife twice to discuss the killing, and had been paid about £50,000.

Mrs Reggiani, aged 50, sat at the back of the court, flanked by prison guards and looking worn and ill after 18 months in Milan's bleak San Vittore prison. Her persistent coughing prompted Judge Renato Samè Ludovici to call a doctor for her.

The prosecution says she became consumed with hatred for her ex-husband after an acrimonious divorce and paid for his murder to prevent him from marrying another woman.

Gucci, the last member of the Florentine fashion dynasty to head the family business, was shot dead on the morning of March 27 1995 as he arrived for work at his Milan office.

Mr Cicala said he had been contacted to arrange the murder by a Milan hotel porter, Ivano Savioni, and Pina Auremma, a Neapolitan clairvoyant and friend of Mrs Reggiani. He agreed to take money from them because he had got into debt buying a restaurant.

"I was under pressure from loan sharks and I thought this was manna from heaven."



"One evening I received a call from Auremma: 'Listen, the package has arrived. The next day we went to Milan, and the petty criminal, in my car.'"

Mrs Reggiani's lawyers, Gaetano Pecorella and Giovanni Maria Dedola, dismissed the testimony as totally implausible.

They admit she had an obsessive hatred of her ex-husband but insist the murder was organised without her knowledge in order to blackmail her.

They insist that she was not fully responsible for her actions after undergoing a brain operation in 1992 and is in such poor health that she should not be kept in prison.

Turkey clamps down on student protests

Chris Morris in Ankara

TURKISH universities have introduced tough regulations which threaten students with expulsion if they take part in demonstrations on or off campus.

The new rules, which university principals want applied throughout the country, seem aimed primarily at students who identify themselves as Islamists. Turkey's secular elite, led by the military, has sought to clamp down on what it sees as a

rise in Islamist activities. The rules will increase the pressure on hundreds of medical students in Istanbul, who have staged demonstrations for months to protest against a ban on Islamic-style headscarves on campus.

Last week the students staged a photographic exhibition documenting their protests. "There are no limitations on thought and attire in a democratic country," they said. "We will not be silent until this prohibition ends."

But the Higher Education Council, which represents university principals, intends to enforce Turkey's secular dress codes strictly. From the beginning of the next academic year, women students will have to present photographs taken without headscarves to register at any university. Male students will have to submit photographs without beards, which are seen as a sign of Muslim piety, and remain clean-shaven throughout the year.

Islamist students say their protests will intensify, but it is now clear that the authorities intend to act quickly. If

both the dress code and the new prohibition against demonstrations are strictly enforced, thousands of students could face expulsion.

As the rules appear to target Islamists, many intellectuals may prefer to remain silent. But there has already been criticism. "The authorities are taking away the right of students to express themselves," said Gulay Gokturk, a columnist in the newspaper *Yeni Yuzil*. "Democracy will once again be sacrificed to political hostilities."

The universities are often the scene of battles between extremists. Last month a student was killed in the north-western town of Bolu, allegedly by far-right nationalists known as Grey Wolves. On Monday a leftwing student was stabbed in Istanbul.

The authorities argue that students are provoked by outsiders. "The tolerant atmosphere on campuses is being exploited for political ends," said Kemal Guruz, president of the Higher Education Council. "The aim of the new rules is not to punish students, but to win them over."

Trailing Kohl aims below the belt in dirty campaign

Ian Traynor in Bonn says no tactic seems too low for the German chancellor (right) as he sets out to win September's election



HELMUT KOHL'S final fling is turning dirty. About eight points adrift in the opinion polls, with four months to go till Germany's general election, the chancellor is baring his teeth, clearly relishing what is shaping into a robust and ruthless campaign.

Win or lose, it is the last campaign for the 68-year-old. After 16 years as chancellor and 26 in charge of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the country's natural party of government, Mr Kohl has often appeared tired and irritable in recent weeks, outshone by the freshness of his formidable challenger, Gerhard Schröder of the Social Democrats.

Suddenly, however, things are changing. Mr Kohl enjoyed a creditable party congress a fortnight ago. He revamped his team of spin doctors and strategists, bringing in several dirty-trick maestros and sacking or sidelining their lacklustre predecessors. After months of bickering in his camp, he has shown iron discipline and is showing a new appetite for what he sees as his toughest election battle.

The evidence suggests Mr Kohl will lose his bid for a fifth term. Record unemployment is his biggest problem. He has only platitudes to offer the dole queues.

Germans prefer Mr Schröder by a margin of two-to-one. But September 27 is not a beauty contest. The voters may be charmed by Mr Schröder, but they do not know him. They may not like Mr Kohl but they respect and seem to trust him. And many Germans will be breaking the habit of a lifetime if they vote for Mr Schröder.

German voters, at least four-fifths of whom are in former West Germany, are profoundly conservative. Not once in postwar Germany have they thrown out a sitting chancellor at a general election.

Mr Kohl is taking no chances, campaigning to terrify voters into sticking with the old buffer they know, if not love. The Kohl team, after initially saying it would fight on policy issues and not on the high ground and is aiming its punches low.

It is a curiously backward-looking strategy, focusing on the red menace as if the cold war had never been won. "Germany watch out," warned the CDU posters this week, depicting a pair of red hands gripped in an iron handshake. The Socialist red hands represent the Social Democrats and the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the former communists of what was East Germany.

The message is that if Mr Kohl loses, reunified Germany will become an East German-style communist state, with Mr Schröder the telegraphic Trojan horse carrying the extremists to power.

A Schröder win would signal the birth of a new German "leftwing republic" under a 1950s Soviet-style "Popular Front" government, according to the new Kohl propaganda.

It is a gross calumny on the Social Democrats. They were forcibly merged with the communists and then banned in East Germany on Moscow's orders in 1949, while the CDU in the east became a lapdog of the communist regime.

The pretext for this latest poster is the Social Democrats' formation of a minority government in the eastern state of Saxony-Anhalt with the tacit support of the PDS. The PDS usually attracts 20 per cent of the east German vote and has mayors and councillors in scores of east German towns and villages, where the local CDU also co-operates with it.

Otto Hauser, Mr Kohl's new spin doctor, a mere week in office but already more aggressive than his predecessor, insists there is little to choose between the PDS and Hitler's Nazi party.

Even if many Germans, particularly in the west, find the former communists distasteful, the comparisons are offensive to many people. The demonising of the former communists also leaves Mr Kohl open to charges of hypocrisy.

Milan Kucan, the president of Slovenia, was in Bonn for friendly talks with Mr Kohl last week, while Boris Yeltsin, the Russian president and Mr Kohl's "dear friend", visits next week.

Moreover, the outgoing Hungarian prime minister, Gyula Horn, is a German national hero. And President Alexander Kwasniewski of Poland is a welcome guest in Bonn. All got where they are today as co-communists. Mr Kohl evidently gets along with former communists provided they are not German.

Mr Kohl and his allies are also not shy of playing the anti-foreigner card to ward off a rightward drift to the neo-Nazis. Mr Kohl's stump speech now includes a ritual threat to deport any of the 8 million immigrants who may abuse German hospitality.

"If foreigners come here, they enjoy the rights of the guest," Mr Kohl told a regional CDU congress. "But they have to behave like the kind of guests you would invite into your home on a Sunday. If they come into the home, wreck the place, beat up the housewife and stamp on the dog, then they will just have to get out of Germany."

And while shedding crocodile tears over a "highly personalised" contest, the CDU is seeking to nail Mr Schröder personally as a liar, a coward and a soap opera politician who cannot sustain a serious debate.

When it comes to ruthlessness, Mr Kohl needs no lessons from anyone, despite his avuncular public image. It is perhaps a sign of desperation that he has so abruptly revamped his campaign team and taken to punching below the belt. But the opinion polls are narrowing, and Mr Kohl has won more elections than any other German politician.



The Christian Democrats' secretary-general, Peter Hintze, unveils a cold war-style election poster

Cod swims to oblivion as the EU flounders

Martin Walker in Brussels

LAST orders are looming in fish and chip shops as the one remaining cod fishery outside the Pacific, the Barents Sea off Norway, is plunged into crisis.

Unless fishing is banned immediately in the area, the main spawning ground for Arctic cod, scientists warn in a report to be published soon that stocks could fall below "the safe biological minimum" next year.

With the Atlantic cod grounds on the Grand Banks off Canada and the United States closed after years of over-fishing, and the North Sea cod fishery going the same way, Britain's favourite fish is swimming into extinction.

"Nobody can say they were not warned. Two years ago, cod and haddock were both put on the World Conservation Union's red list for endangered species," said Mike Sutton, who runs the global fisheries campaign for the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

When North Sea stocks began falling, the industry turned to the Grand Banks. And when that closed, with the loss of 40,000 jobs, they increased their fishing in the Barents Sea, with predictable results. Now there is nowhere left to turn, except to the Pacific cod, which is a different species. They'll probably fish that out next.

The Barents Sea report, by the International Council for Exploration of the Sea, has provoked a political row. Based in Copenhagen, ICES

produces surveys of the world's fisheries. But its latest word of this report, claiming the cod population of the Barents Sea has been over-estimated, has caused outrage in Norway. Fishermen claim cuts in quotas would cost them £200 million.

After a catastrophic fall in yields in the 1990s, which forced authorities to slash the catch from 800,000 tons a year to 170,000 tons, the Barents Sea is supposed to be one of the best-controlled fisheries.

This latest crisis comes as European Union ministers scramble to resolve the last one, with a plan to require all EU fishing vessels to fit transponders so they can be tracked by satellite.

The campaign to ban drift nets on the high seas will end next week, when EU fisheries ministers meet in Brussels.

But the drift nets row

reveals the weakness of EU fishing rules. The EU is still ignoring United Nations resolutions to ban nets longer than 1.5 miles. And Italian fishermen are still lobbying hard against an EU ban on the 10-mile-long nets they use to catch swordfish and tuna, but which devastate the Mediterranean dolphins.

"The EU still remains one of the really big problems," Mr Sutton said. "When the Commission proposes something sensible, it gets watered down or blocked in the Council, where ministers come under political pressure from their fishermen."

The battle is under way to rewrite the EU's Common Fisheries Policy, which is to be renegotiated in four years' time — "if there are any fish left by then," the WWF notes dryly. The issue is whether the political will can be mustered to stop the EU scheme

under which it "buys" fishing rights from third countries. The EU spends £160 million a year, mainly paying African countries to let Spanish vessels scoop up their fish.

This EU subsidy is part of the bizarre economics of global fishing, for which governments pump in an annual £15 billion in subsidies for a catch worth £55 billion.

All the world's fisheries are in trouble after the global catch quadrupled in the 40 years after 1950.

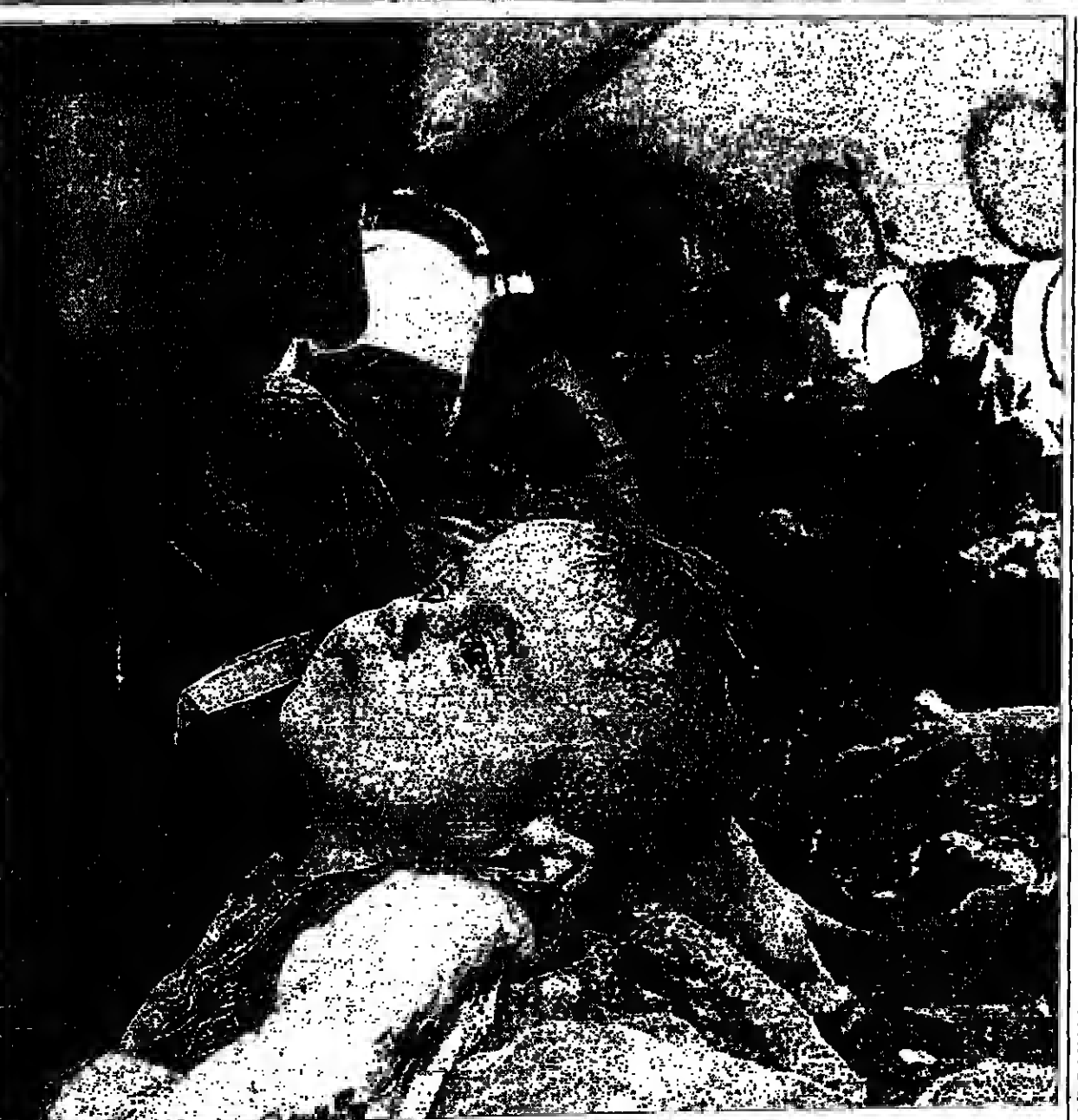
The answer has been to cut the fleet. But the EU target to reduce the fleet by 40 per cent in six years has been scrapped. The EU now has the worst of all worlds — failing to manage its threatened stocks while inflicting its fisherymen.

There are 260,000 fishermen in the EU. They catch 7 million tons a year, in fourth place behind China (13 million tons), Japan (9.3 million tons) and the former Soviet Union countries (9.2 million tons).

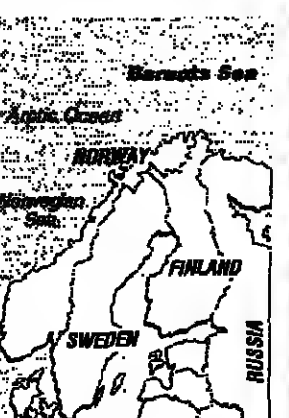
Perhaps the saddest aspect of the news from the Barents Sea is the doubt it casts on one of the most hopeful developments in the sad saga of man's mismanagement of the marine harvest.

Two years ago, the WWF and the food giant Unilever jointly set up the Marine Stewardship Council, with a pledge by Unilever only to use fish from sustainable stocks.

That far-sighted agreement depends entirely on the inexact science of estimating fish stocks. The forthcoming announcement by ICES that its earlier estimates of Barents Sea stocks were wrong undermines the entire strategy.



An injured Afghan girl is comforted by her father while being evacuated by helicopter from her village in the remote north-east of Afghanistan yesterday after an earthquake which measured 7.1 on the Richter scale. As many as 5,000 people may have died, and 40 villages been destroyed, in the quake and the landslides it triggered, according to unconfirmed estimates by relief agencies. In February another severe quake in the same area killed between 1,200 and 4,000 people



Cod face extinction in one of the last remaining fisheries



Zollamérica Narváez (inset), stepdaughter of former Sandinista president Daniel Ortega (centre), has inspired her countrywomen to cry halt to men riding roughshod over their lives

Republicans scent blood over 'cash links to Beijing'

Martin Kettle in Washington reports on attempts to embarrass the president as he prepares for his historic visit

REPUBLICAN congressional leaders agreed yesterday to hold a series of urgent, high-profile inquiries into the White House's financial connections with China before Bill Clinton goes to Beijing later this month, the first visit by a United States president since the Tiananmen Square massacre nine years ago.

Some Republicans even claim that the Loral deal was directly responsible for goading India, and then Pakistan, into beginning their recent nuclear test programmes

of satellite technology know-how to China.

Today is the formal deadline for Mr Clinton to ask Congress to renew China's "most-favoured nation" trading status. Mr Lott and his Republican colleagues have supported the measure in the past, but they are considering opposing it this time.

"The president fully intends to make a strong case on why we should continue normal trade relations with China," the White House spokesman, Mike McCurry, said on Monday.

Mr Lott said Mr Clinton's request would be "reviewed carefully".

In the annual battle, the president will argue that his policy of engagement with China has produced tangible benefits, including its agreement to end nuclear exports to Iran, assistance in the continuing Asian financial crisis, the release of prominent civil rights dissidents and the opening up of investment opportunities for US companies.

He will say he needs to

visit Beijing to maintain the momentum.

Although Congress is expected to renew China's most-favoured status, there is no mistaking the markedly anti-China mood on Capitol Hill of the past few weeks, especially in the wake of the revelation that the White House gave the Loral space technology company — whose chairman Bernard Schwartz is one of the Democratic Party's biggest donors — a satellite export licence at the same time as the justice department was investigating Loral for unauthorised transfers of missile technology.

What makes the Loral story particularly controversial is not Mr Schwartz's \$1 million (£625,000) donations to the Democratic National Committee, but the fact that Mr Clinton and his advisers ignored the justice department and a Pentagon warning by issuing the export licence in February. The licence allowed Loral to launch a satellite from a Chinese rocket.

Anti-China and anti-Clinton Republicans have seized on the controversy with enthusiasm, believing that it provides them with a more effective weapon against the Democrats in a mid-term election year than allegations about Mr Clinton's sex life or his arcane bank dealings long ago in Arkansas.

The Republican senator Richard Shelby said the Loral deal had generated "the most serious allegations that I've heard of any administration in the last eight, 10, 12 years".

Some Democrats share that view. "It's about foreign policy allegedly being affected by political contributions," said the Texas Democratic congressman Chet Edwards. "If that's true, it's political dynamite."

Mr Clinton's critics also want a fresh investigation of the Democratic Party fund-raising by Johnnie Chung. He said federal investigators that he funnelled nearly \$100,000 from a Chinese military officer, Liu Chao-ying, into Democratic Party accounts during the 1996 presidential election.

Foreign lobbying in US domestic party politics has a long pedigree, not least among the pro-Israel lobby. The White House has tried to brush off the criticisms concerning Mr Chung by saying such a scheme would be "amazing" and it has insisted the Loral deal was authorised by "routine" procedures.

Last week Mr McCurry said: "This administration has pursued the exact same policy pursued by the Bush administration."

But what excites the Republicans is their view that in the Loral deal the president of the United States personally made sure that a company owned by one of his party's biggest donors was able to supply the world's second most powerful country with the technology to blind US spy satellites attacks on the US.

Some Republicans even claim that the Loral deal was directly responsible for goading India, and then Pakistan, into beginning their recent nuclear test programmes.



Hillary Clinton adorns the cover of a Chinese women's magazine on sale in Beijing, a sign of growing interest in the First Lady and President Clinton as he prepares to visit China

New Chinese critics shine light on dark side of politics

The Tiananmen Square massacre is still off-limits, but writers are winning readers by daring to challenge party diehards. **John Gittings** reports

A NEW debate now sweeping China about reform has raised issues barely mentioned in public since the upheaval of 1989.

The events which led to the Beijing massacre exactly nine years ago still cannot be referred to directly. But newly published books and articles are criticising the Maoist diehards in the Communist Party who backed the suppression of the students.

More liberal-minded party leaders have encouraged a new generation of intellectuals to take a hard look at the darker side of China's economic and social revolution. One of the criticisms is that 70 per cent of state assets have been "siphoned off into private pockets".

The new critics also warn that the "leftwing" forces in the party are preparing for another battle. This time, they say, it will be fought over the "reform of political structures", which the diehards fear could lead to more democracy.

Top of booklists is *Crossing Swords*, written by two journalists on the official People's Daily newspaper. It has already sold 300,000 copies and can be found on railway bookstalls and in small-town bookshops all over the country.

One of the authors, Ma

Licheng, recently had a well-publicised meeting with the former deputy prime minister Wan Li, who congratulated him for exposing the "bad ideas" of the leftwingers.

Nine years ago the students in Tiananmen Square had high hopes that Mr Wan would support them when he returned from abroad, but he was prevented by the hardliners from coming back to Beijing.

Crossing Swords warns that recent documents issued by the "left" have the same dogmatic ring as Maoist diatribes during the Cultural Revolution 30 years ago. The book avoids describing what happened in 1989, only referring elliptically to "various reasons" which led to a harsher political climate in the early 1990s.

But it denounces the hardliners for taking advantage of the crackdown to call for a renewal of "class struggle" and to oppose Deng Xiaoping's efforts to revive the faltering economic reforms.

Another bestseller, *The Trap of Modernisation* by He Qinglian, a young communist, provides a detailed account of the climate of corruption and the widening gap between rich and poor. She lists 12 types of illegal operation in the

"black economy", ranging from drugs and prostitution to currency fraud, insider trading and illegal sale of planning permits. The sex and pornography business is "one of the main areas of black income", she says.

Ms He also cites statistics showing that no customs duty has been paid on up to four of every five cars imported from Japan.

The popularity of these books reflects a new spirit of debate in a previously numb intellectual climate, but it does not yet amount — as some optimists have suggested — to a "springtime" of liberal thought in China.

The authors avoid delicate topics such as the treatment of dissidents and the kind of democratic change needed. This is not just because of political inhibitions: they also strongly believe that the only secure route towards liberalisation is through continued economic reform.

They back the supreme party leader, Jiang Zemin, and hope to stiffen his resolve by presenting a strong case for pushing ahead.

But in describing the struggle between the dogmatic "left" and the enlightened supporters of reform, they throw impor-



Beats the Crossing Swords warns that the left sounds as dogmatic now as it did in the Cultural Revolution

tant light on the darkest episodes of recent history, and suggest the struggle is still continuing.

Crossing Swords was rejected by a dozen publishers, who feared it might "cause difficulties" for them, before it was accepted in a new popular series called *China's Problems*.

The title appears, in the current fashion, in both English and Chinese.

The book has been criticised for undermining the party's "basic line" at seminars organised by academic journals edited by orthodox party intellectuals.

Corruption remains the most compelling subject. Many books offer, with clear political overtones, potted histories of the 50 worst cases since Mao's revolution in 1949.

Revolution flares again in Nicaragua. This time women are challenging the old order of male impunity

Ed Vallentyne in Managua

THE Nicaraguan political elite, left and right, closed ranks yesterday behind the Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega as his immunity from prosecution on charges of sexually abusing her as a child, and raping her.

Even former enemies in the contra movement, which fought an insurrection against him, intend to defend Mr Ortega against his adopted stepdaughter Zollamérica Narváez. The episode is blowing apart the Ortega dynasty, once an inspiration to the political left worldwide, and provoking a quiet revolution in Nicaragua and its famously effervescent political underground.

Ms Narváez's accusations are prompting women to make a stand against the power of men in politics and the home, in a country where one in two women has suffered sexual or domestic violence.

Volleta Deljando of the Women's Network Against Violence said: "This is our opportunity to scale the 'second wall' after the Sandinista rebellion — the issue no one can escape from. This is the moment at which we either act or else remain frozen forever, wearing a face without dignity. It's one thing to talk about these things; now something has to be done."

Ms Narváez's supporters say politicians are protecting what her close friend Angela Savallios called "not just Ortega's parliamentary immunity, but the moral immunity of men in this society, and the culture of machismo".

Ms Narváez filed charges last week accusing Mr Ortega of sexual abuse from when she was 11 until 1982, "continuous" rape from 1982 to 1992, and sexual harassment thereafter.

She had intended to go to parliament on Monday to ask for Mr Ortega's immunity to be lifted, but changed her mind after a judge dismissed the charges on the technicality that they were filed in an open writ not a sealed one, on the wrong kind of paper. Friends say she intends to refile the charges and then go to parliament, probably this week.

Rightwing deputies are ready to block proceedings against their old enemy, Carlos Guerra of the Liberal Party, which includes many former contras, said the allegations were "emotional and extemporaneous". Eduardo Rizo of the Patriot Party, part of the ruling bloc, said they were "motivated" and Mr Ortega had "nothing to answer for".

The closing of ranks is transparently a political pact: Ms Narváez's attempt to lift Mr Ortega's immunity coincides with an unfolding parallel scandal, the "Narvoje" investigation into alleged use of President Arnoldo Alemán's private light plane for smuggling cocaine.

Ms Narváez's attempt to lift Mr Ortega's immunity coincides with an unfolding parallel scandal, the "Narvoje" investigation into alleged use of President Arnoldo Alemán's private light plane for smuggling cocaine.

Cardinal Miguel Obando, Archbishop of Managua, has entered the fray, saying he did not expect Ms Narváez's accusations to reach trial on Mr Ortega's immunity to be lifted. "It's impossible for this to go that far because we're in Nicaragua, where if someone has power no one can touch it," he said. He urged deputies to "act according to their consciences".

Ms Narváez declines to give interviews but talks regularly to Ms Savallios, a former international spokeswoman for the Sandinista government, now a PR consultant.

She told her about a conversation with her mother, Rosario Murillo — last week Ms Murillo who has led the counter-attack on her husband's behalf, "told her own daughter she should tell the truth", Ms Savallios said. "Zollamérica

replied: 'Mother, there cannot be your truth and my truth. Mine is the only truth.'

Ms Savallios, who has left the party, said: "This is what happens when men are threatened by a woman's charges. They come together to protect the machista culture, from whatever political side they're on."

She added: "In terms of women, this case is about realising that men will always stick together. In terms of an individual, it is about finding out whether you have a mother. This is a real drama that is happening."

Ms Murillo stepped up the counter-attack yesterday with an interview in the newspaper *Nuevo Diario*. She said her daughter was being "manipulated".

Michelle Natis, the director of the Women's Advice Centre to which Ms Narváez took her accusations, said: "It's very sad that Daniel Ortega, accused of a grave crime, does not respond to these serious accusations, leaving it to third parties to launch personal attacks and attempt to neutralise them."

In one of the scrappy barrios on the western outskirts of Managua, Mr Ortega staged a special Mother's Day walkabout on Sunday to show that he was still a man of the family.

This shanty town was once his natural home: women once allowed their way forward to kiss his hand, men to shake it. Now his jeep encountered an unquiet crowd, a nasty atmosphere and a

'Now, suddenly, many women are coming forward. They have given themselves permission to speak'

scuffle. His cronies barged through the crowd, a female television reporter was violently manhandled by a group of his supporters, and a woman shouted "violador" — rapist.

A few blocks away, opposite the imposing headquarters of the Sandinista Workers' Association, is the small house where the Women's Network Against Violence operates.

Ms Deljando said the only thorough study of violence against women in Nicaragua by the university in León in 1994-5, found that half of them had suffered sexual abuse or domestic violence, three-quarters of them at the hands of a relative.

"Now, suddenly, many women are coming forward, speaking out with Zollamérica about what has happened to them. They have given themselves permission to speak," she said.

"For instance, me. We were discussing this in my family last week, six of us, and it turned out three of us had suffered, including my mother. And I know another who was too frightened to admit it."

Her network has successfully lobbied for tougher laws against the abuse of women, including the admission of psychological evidence of trauma after physical scars have vanished.

She feels betrayed by the leftwing leadership and sees "a moment when women have to show their self-esteem, to vindicate Zollamérica and with her themselves."

The network plans to hold demonstrations, "out" abuses and flood deputies with letters. But she said: "Many women cannot believe this is true. Ortega is like a father figure to them, and just as they keep silent over their own fathers, they cannot accept Ortega's guilt."

"If you say you support Zollamérica you are taking a position in your life, in front of all your household, all your neighbours and your own history."

Diary

Matthew Norman

THE Secret Art Of Government — a BBC2 documentary about the recherche Whitehall department (called GAC) which allocates paintings to the Government — offers a fascinating glimpse into ministerial souls. Take Robin Cook (to borrow from Max Miller). In his first press conference as Foreign Secretary, an enormous painting of a Nepalese Prince/Prime Minister is seen on the office wall. Asked about redecorating, Cook says that this one has to go, and he later has it removed on the baffling grounds that it is "ideologically unsound". Indeed, he repeats this phrase in the press conference, insisting — even more confusingly — that it would be hard to replace because "all old paintings that are big are ideologically unsound". Well, it must make sense to him. Eventually, we learn, he did find an ideologically sound replacement. Any guesses? No? An absolutely enormous mirror. Vanity, vanity, thy name is Cook. Tomorrow we consider the office pictorial choice of my old friend Mandy Mandelson.

THE art world is double blessed: tomorrow, a Fulham Road gallery will hold a private viewing of paintings (you will not find the phrase "inspired watercolours" here) by Paul Johnson. My sane and rational friend has been a very naughty boy of late, but we still love the silly old sausage to pieces, and hope to find the time to join him at the viewing.

ON the sports pages of the Sun, Paul Gascoigne is interviewed by Brian Woolnough. Mr Woolnough has a nice way of stringing together the quotes. "Playing for England is bigger than my life," says Gazza in one paragraph. "If that's the way he feels, that's the way he feels," he adds, of Hoddle, a few paragraphs later. "It isn't the end of my world." The back page headline is: "He (Hoddle) may as well have killed me."

HER Majesty's strongest and most intriguing houseguest writes with important news. Charles Bronson, the poet and cartoonist whose sentence was recently ex-



tended by seven years for the taking of Israeli hostages (he demanded a cheese sandwich and a helicopter to Cuba), has been granted a signal military honour: he has received a letter from the Royal Green Jackets 2nd Battalion in Bosnia, requesting a signed photo, and asking his permission to make him the regimental mascot. Charles is felled, but has yet to decide whether to grant it. We hope he does. As the official representative of peace-keeping forces, who better than Charles? And besides, he makes a highly refreshing change from Melinda Messenger.

CONTRARY to a reference in yesterday's item about the conversion to Judaism of Boris the Jackal Johnson, the actor Ron Moody is not late. The one-time Fagin is, in fact, extremely punctual, appearing on stage at the same time each night this week, in Cambridge, in a musical adaptation of The Canterville Ghost. We apologise for yet another unaccountably sloppy piece of journalism.

IN the Washington Post, a story about Viagra is antivivified by the following paragraph. "Nine patients taking Viagra died during clinical trials, compared to one patient who took a fake pill as part of the test and died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound," the Post reports. "The company and the agency determined that those deaths were 'plausibly not related' to the drug."

Tough Grip...



It won't be a proper war without Gazza. What else is football for?

Jonathan Freedland



IT'S lucky I'm not the England coach, because I would have picked Paul Gascoigne. OK, I know next to nothing about football. I don't support a club, I can barely kick a ball — but I do know that if you're the England manager, picking Gazza is part of the job description. It comes with the territory. Indeed, and it may sound presumptuous for a soccer ignoramus like myself to say this about one of the greatest footballers of his generation — Glenn Hoddle's decision suggests he doesn't understand what football is all about.

England's coach seems to think it's all a bloodless exercise in technical efficiency and robotic prowess. His talk of physical condition, fitness levels and the new breed of soccer "athletes" suggests Hoddle is less concerned to build a football team than a well-tuned machine. But what we soccer outsiders know is that football is not precision science. It's all about passion, fervour and deep, raging emotion — areas in which Paul Gascoigne remains a world-class performer.

That's why Gazza has earned his place in France, but it's also why football has become the most important game on the planet. The politicians understand it so do the money men and so, too, do Mr Hoddle's fellow international managers. Unlike him, they realise that soccer is much more than a mere sporting contest, contingent on such minor matters as a player's latest form. Stronger forces of national pride, tribal identity and human drama are at work — a lesson we are set to learn all over again in a tournament

which will dominate British life for the next five weeks. Sky TV showed it understood soccer's devotion at the start of the season, when it promoted its Premiership coverage under the slogan, "It's Our Religion." Coca-Cola tagged along with "Eat Football, Sleep Football." The latest edition of Sponsorship News predicts that "early in the millennium, the World Cup will overtake the Olympic Games to become sport's greatest moneyspinner."

Politicians drew that same conclusion decades ago, ruling that football was far too important to play games with. It's striking that the World Cup is the only major global sporting event never to have fallen victim to an international boycott. While the Moscow Olympics of 1980 and the Los Angeles Games of 1984 both became battlefields of the cold war, the World Cup went ahead in 1982 without a hitch.

OF COURSE, it helped that those arch-boycotters, the Americans, did not find their footballing feet until after the fall of communism: by the time they competed in Italia '90, there was no Soviet bloc worth boycotting. But the chief cause of the World Cup's immunity from geo-politicalising is governments' fear of the power of the game. Most leaders of footballing nations know that soccer is bigger than they are — and that to suggest putting out of the quadrennial soccer-fest is to risk popular insurrection.

How else to explain the absence of a campaign to keep Nigeria out of the coming finals? The Abacha regime's appalling human rights record has made Nigeria an emerg-

ing pariah nation and the object of heavy EU sanctions. Since those apply to France, Nigeria should have been blocked from taking part. Yet almost no one — except the lone voice of Glenys Kinnock, raised in the European parliament — has suggested the ban be implemented. It's as if boycotts are all very well for the boring old Olympic Games — but football simply matters too much.

As Bill Shankly famously remarked, "Football isn't a matter of life and death — it's more important than that." The Colombian defender Andres Escobar proved the point in 1994 when, days after he had scored an own goal against the United States which led to his team's ejection from the tournament, he was shot 12 times outside a bar in Medellin. "A costly error," as John Motson might say. And, of course, there was 1989's Football War between Honduras and El Salvador — an armed conflict which left 6,000 dead and which began with a dispute over a soccer game. "Football may have been just the catalyst," writes Chris Taylor in his new book *The Beautiful Game*, "but would the people of El Salvador and Honduras have got so worked up about volleyball, or a beauty contest?"

They would not. But what explains this degree of fervour, apparently peculiar to soccer? It helps that football is the people's game, of course: the rules are simple and, with no need for special equipment, it costs nothing to play. But the appeal is deeper. My guess is that it beats the likes of tennis, boxing and Olympic athletics because it is about teams. Whole peoples can get

behind a football team because they are bigger than any one individual: they become instead representatives of the tribe. "They are wearing the flag and going to war," says Channel 5 sports anchor Jonny Gould. Football is battle by other means, with the 11 men our chosen force. No wonder Saddam Hussein is said to have beaten the soles of the Iraqi national team after its failure to qualify for this month's finals: they had inflicted a collective humiliation on Iraq no less than those soldiers cut down on the road to Basra.

So much more is at stake on the football field than mere gymnastics with a plastic sphere. The heroes of the game understood that: that's what makes them magical. Their home nations understand it, too. That's why Italy has sent Roberto Baggio to France even though he is, like Gazza, 31 years old. Germany would not be without Lothar Matthaus even though he is a creaky 37. And the Saudis have found a place for their own Gazza, Saeed Owairan — even though he was jailed for six months for immoral behaviour after he was "found in the incriminating presence of drink and women."

Paul Gascoigne is like them — not fast or clinical, but capable of inspiring his teammates and pulling off an 89th-minute dash of brilliance. If football was played on a computer spreadsheet, then maybe Gazza should have been dumped. But since it involves human flesh and blood, with an uncanny way of entering hearts across the globe, Paul Gascoigne — unlike football itself — should not be coming home.

Children of despair

Polly Toynbee



SOCIAL engineers since Plato have suggested that children be taken away from their parents to be reared by the state as model citizens. Communists, Nazis, the Australian Aborigine programme, kibbutzim, British orphanages packing off children to work in the colonies — almost every society is littered with Utopian experiments to uproot a supposed underclass in an attempt to re-sculpt society from the beginning. High minded in intent, they were all, of course, inhumane, usually brutal and punitive.

We still do it now, though with different intentions. Fifty thousand children are in the care of the state, not because we think we do them good, but because the state is the parent of last resort when all else fails. Since we no longer de-lude ourselves that this is some social good in itself but a sign of failure, these children have been left to drift in a desolate limbo, part of no project, aimless, expensive and lost.

Since the war, report after report has described the disastrous failure with these children. Last autumn Sir William Utting produced a devastating study which led to the setting up of a ministerial task force, to report in late summer. If policy-makers need another nudge, they should have been watching last night's Undercover Britain on Channel 4. Secret filming inside three private children's homes revealed abysmal neglect and squalor, children left alone to do nothing, without education or stimulation, watching television, or pacing up and down all day, without games or attention of any kind. One young boy had ballooned from 11 to 18 stone through neglect.

But there is a danger that such stories and all the paedophile scandals may paper over the greater scandal of the way all children in care are treated. Abuse stories imply that if the bad apples were weeded out, everything else would be OK. But the stark statistics on "ordinary" care are themselves shocking. Three quarters of children in care leave with no qualifications of any kind, 10 times more likely than others to be excluded from school. Their many moves between homes and foster families — 15 moves in three years is not unusual — make "care" a meaningless word. Half of care leavers are unemployed. The Downing Street Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) produced a brief section on children in care in their recent report on social exclusions. They set a target for local authorities to ensure that half of all children in care achieve some qualifications by the year 2000. We have yet to see whether the SEU has the teeth to really make things happen on the ground with local authorities. This will be one easy test of whether they are just another think tank or a genuinely effective and powerful arm of government.

OTHER outcomes of care are just as bad. Only one per cent of children enter care because of offending behaviour. They may be deeply disturbed when they arrive — but they are not yet criminals. However, 38 per cent of all young prisoners have been in care. One in seven girls leaves care either pregnant or with a baby. Children from care are four times more likely to kill themselves and they make up a third of the homeless.

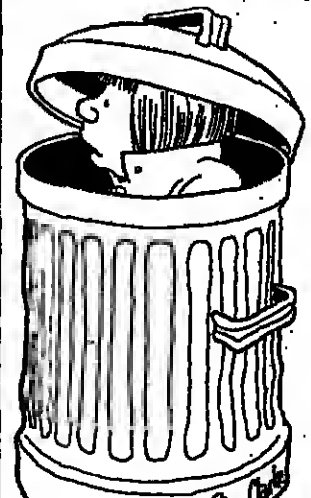
The irony is that there is so much hand-wringing about out-of-control children — and yet the same state that over the years keeps expressing moral angst about bad parenting is the very worst parent of them all. What wouldn't those Utopian social engineers from other eras have given for the chance to get their hands on 50,000 of the most troubled and troublesome children? Ten years old is the average age of entering the care Gulag —

young enough to rescue their tilted lives and save many of them from a life of misery or worse.

Adding up what they will cost the state in future crime and social need dwarfs even the huge sums we already spend on merely containing them. For once, money really isn't the problem. These children cost anything up to £1,800 a week in care — six times what it would cost to send them to Eton. For that, sum many get no education worth the name, no psychotherapy, (though they need it more than any other group in the land), no consistent parent figure, a largely untrained, fast-changing, low-paid staff and barely a social worker.

Yet these children are a relatively easy social problem. The SEU is struggling to find ways to turn around 1300 of the worst housing estates, a vast, intractable, multi-disciplinary social nightmare. While here are just 50,000 children in the state's hands already, waiting to have good done to them. For anyone with itchy social engineering fingers, this is the dream experiment and test the relative value of foster care and children's homes. In just a few years it should be possible to boast of a great social policy success. Why has no one done anything until now?

Now we wait for the ministerial task force to report. The word is that they will require local authorities to continue to care for children into their early 20s, the way most parents usually do. They have discussed at length the last two decades' policy of putting as many children as possible



For anyone with itchy social engineering fingers, this is the dream experiment

into foster homes, because it was cheaper and deemed to be safer. But untrained, lowly paid foster parents may not provide the best care. Without help and support, too many foster placements break down, leading to the appalling number of moves each child makes. An unstable life no ordinary child could survive, let alone those who are already vulnerable. An old fashioned model is back on the agenda, one which was driven out by the professionalisation of social work. The task force is considering re-introducing small homes, with long-term, well-paid house parents. These "family" homes would be grouped together on a campus with high-level facilities, including intensive education. Observers say the ministers in charge, Frank Dobson and Paul Boateng, have been plainly deeply moved by the plight of children in care.

As ever, the testing time for the Government's resolution will come after the Task Force report, when we see if they manage to push through their recommendations. Making social policy is easy — making it happen is something else, especially in dealing with local authorities. Among all this government's admirable social reforming zeal, their effectiveness will be easiest to assess with this one small group of children. The outcome will be plain for us all to see.

Prescott can't keep blaming the Tories for the great train fiasco

Off the rails

Keith Harper

RAIL privatisation is not working. It has been nothing short of an unmitigated disaster and John Prescott cannot continue to blame the Tories indefinitely.

When Sir George Young, John Major's transport secretary, boarded the first privatised train from Twickenham two years ago, even he could not have realised that the result of the salami-slicing policy of the Conservatives would be so devastating. An industry cut up into more than 100 different parts, and sold off at obscene speed for at most a third of its real value, was always going to create problems. Stripped of its cohesion, it has become so fragmented that few decision-makers are prepared to take responsibility for what goes on outside their own patch.

The effects unfold on a

daily basis (and there are never-ending complaints from Guardian readers). In the past few weeks alone, rail industry managers have expressed fears at the level of rail safety, and the rail franchise director has chastised operating companies for bad service.

Concern about safety has been mounting. Rail is still the safest mode of travel, but the industry has been taken to task by the rail inspectorate for allowing commercial considerations to dominate track repair decisions. And cowboy companies are being allowed to break into the market without proper supervision.

Indicatively, the rail franchise director, John O'Brien, has limited powers to penalise rail companies who under-perform. With the fat subsidies given by the Tories as an inducement to take the goods away, the companies can afford to pay the relatively small penalties imposed for

poor punctuality or for running short trains. The only noticeable change for the passenger has been the emergence of different liveries among the competing companies, adding a dash of new colour to what are otherwise dreary journeys.

Concern about safety mounts. Cowboys are allowed in

Under British Rail, the fares system sometimes bordered on the incomprehensible. Today it is ridiculous: wide and unfair variations which leave passengers gasping with incredulity.

How, for instance, can the return fare between Southampton and London be, at £40.60, almost double the £22.30 charged in the

reverse direction? The regulator should insist on uniformity from the train operators. Penalising passengers because they happen to live in different parts of the country is intolerable.

The trains are full and the operators, still living off the subsidies from the Tories, don't care.

Mr Prescott has been able to harness the public's hatred of rail privatisation to good effect. Telling us that the Government cannot be held responsible for this woeful legacy, and that he will act to get it right, produces a favourable gut reaction from the frustrated commuter. The deputy prime minister has promised that his transport white paper next month will reassure rail users about the Government's intentions.

But will it? Mr Prescott has an awful lot of juggling to do. Rail is not going to be re-nationalised. The new system can only be tam-

pered with, because the train companies are here for at least another five years, taking us beyond the next election.

His plans for a strategic rail authority to exercise more control from the centre cannot be realised for at least another year, depending on Mr Prescott's legislative priorities in the next Parliamentary session.

But a decision to leave the issue unresolved, banking on the public's acceptance that Labour inherited a mess from the Tories, would be dangerous. The public has a notoriously short memory.

Over the next 12 months, the industry will produce still more fat cats, its reliability will still be held up to question, and a series of damaging cases, culminating in the Southall train inquiry, will show that it is not as safe as it should be. If the Government strings out important decisions, it may well string itself up instead.

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Iren of air

young enough to rescue the blighted lives and save them from a life of misery or worse.

Adding up what they will cost the state in future crime and social need dwarf the huge sums we already spend on merely containing them. For once, money isn't the problem. These children cost anything up to a week in care - six times what it would cost to put them to bed. For the state, the name, no psychotherapy, through they must need more than any other group of children, a consistent presence, a largely unmet need for a stable family life.

Yet these children are strictly very social. The state is struggling to find a way to turn around the lives of these children, to give them a chance of a normal life, to give them a chance of a normal life, to give them a chance of a normal life.

It is indeed very hard, probably impossible, to wind back the clock and to draw the line where we are now may seem the only option. When the Iranian foreign minister stirs the pot by hailing a Muslim bomb, and China hints that it may be forced to resume

Next step for Nuclear Five

Make disarmament real

THE NUCLEAR summit tomorrow in Geneva will reflect a sense of utter hopelessness over the new arms race in South Asia. In advance of the foreign ministers' meeting of the Nuclear Five, diplomats have already been seeking to lower expectations. The US, says the State Department, will not press for sanctions: the task is now to work out a concerted strategy to stop the Indo-Pakistan rivalry from escalating further. Sanctions, the US has surprisingly discovered, don't work. The best to be hoped for is to find ways of promoting "dialogue and reconciliation" between the two countries. Nothing could more clearly demonstrate the bankrupt nature of the anti-proliferation strategy of the nuclear club. The atomic genie is out of the bottle: let's try and persuade them not to fight but just be nice instead.

Robin Cook was equally hesitant on Monday in his statement to the Commons. The Group of Eight's foreign ministers, who meet next week in London, will also have modest objectives. They will "coordinate the response" of the G8, said Mr Cook, and seek - what else? - to "promote dialogue." Better still, he added, they were in favour of meaningful dialogue. Of course. If it were that simple, then the Kashmir dispute would have been solved long ago.

It is indeed very hard, probably impossible, to wind back the clock and to draw the line where we are now may seem the only option. When the Iranian foreign minister stirs the pot by hailing a Muslim bomb, and China hints that it may be forced to resume

testing, then a policy of damage limitation begins to appear the best option. True, the Iranian rhetoric should not be taken too seriously. And China is only drawing attention to the clause in the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) which allows countries to resume testing if their "supreme national security" is threatened. This is a disingenuous argument from Beijing. India's modest test cannot possibly pose any threat to China which would require further testing of its own considerable arsenal. Beijing's real purpose is to dissuade the Indian government from continuing to rant about the "Chinese threat," and perhaps stack up a bargaining card before Clinton's visit. But it illustrates a serious point: the CTBT (still by the way unratified by three of the nuclear five including the US) contains - if it should ever come into force - a standard let-out clause for any nuclear signatory. No wonder that the charge of nuclear hypocrisy convinces so many in Delhi and other Third World capitals.

Is there any alternative to pessimism, not to say cynicism, at a state of affairs which always existed on paper but has now been translated by the Indo-Pakistan escalation into reality? That is, that nuclear weapons are here to stay and with them the ineluctable expansion of the nuclear club. This prospect may give quiet satisfaction to some people. It has refurbished the plea of various intelligence agencies for more funds to pursue the monitoring of alleged "rogue" states. It has strengthened the case of those proud to be nuclear that abolition is a pipe-dream.

We have two choices. We may acquiesce in such super-realism and hope nothing too dreadful will happen in our lifetimes. Or we may protest that this is intolerable: that the world must not be cast back into the

nuclear shadows from which we were told we had emerged. The Indian proposal for an anti-nuclear convention may be cynical in its current intent. But a new, serious, sustained, effort has to be made to begin to move towards abolition, and the Nuclear Five have to make it. That is what they should start talking about in Geneva.

Spinners' web

Vital boundaries are endangered

A PUBLIC performance by Sir Bernard Ingham is not the novelty it once would have been. Since leaving his post as Lady Thatcher's press spokesman in 1993, Sir Bernard has made the Bunkum and Balderdash Show, previously performed only in private for Westminster lobby correspondents, available to television chavushes, student classes, after-dinner audiences and, until its reconsecration as the People's Daily, to readers of the Daily Express.

Yesterday Sir Bernard enjoyed a session with the Commons Public Administration Select Committee in which to air his pyrotechnic views on "poodle" journalism and the creeping politicisation of the Government Information Service (GIS) under New Labour in general and his Downing St successor-but-three, Alastair Campbell, in particular.

It was, as ever, a lively performance from the Emeritus Professor of Spin Medicine. But was it an accurate portrait of the new regime? Up to a point. It is true that Mr Campbell is not a career civil servant, but belongs to a hybrid category of Whitehall appointee, a special adviser who can wear a Labour Party hat when needs must. Every senior minister has had such advisers for 25 years and defenders of the system argue

that it enables GIS staff to maintain their political neutrality, leaving party dirt-dishing to the Campbells, Charlie Whelans and their ilk.

It is also true that Labour has both invigorated and centralised the Whitehall information network to ensure that the government is seen to be united and "on message." New technologies, those faxes, mobiles, e-mail and the dreaded pager, make that both possible and necessary. Even Sir Bernard (though he denied it) would have to wear a pager now.

More worrying (and this is what the select committee is investigating) is the resignation or dismissal of at least half a dozen departmental information chiefs since election day, amid claims that they resisted improper pressure to put party political "spin" on some of those myriad press releases churned out each day.

Each case is different. But there are fair grounds for claiming that the boundaries between neutral officialdom and political propaganda are being further eroded by this image-conscious government. But, like so much about New Labour, this vice has been inherited from the Thatcher era. Who was it who used to ask if an official was "one of us"? Come to think of it, which civil service press spokesman hurried himself upon her funeral pyre?

Coded products

How long can humans last out?

THERE are no plans for celebration but it is 25 years since the invention of that icon of the times - the barcode. From a humble start in an IBM research laboratory it has been slowly taking over the world (and we haven't seen the half of it yet). Initial

suspicions that they might shortchange customers at tills have been allayed. We have even got used to the way they are used to build up profiles of our spending for customer loyalty schemes. Usage has spread from supermarkets (for which they were originally designed) to grocery stores, petrol stations, lawyers' offices, betting shops, pop art, government departments (including the Inland Revenue).

They are the *esperanto* of merchandising - tracking stocks, work in progress, ordering, routing and sales. Some transport companies use bar codes so you can track where in the world your package is at any one moment through the internet. Technology will soon enable people to scan products at home to create a virtual shopping list. Newspapers have not been unaffected - the bar code on the front of the Guardian includes data about the price, the day and the week of the year.

So far bar codes have been confined to things, but during the next 25 years this will surely change. Already experiments have been done with bees which have had minute barcodes attached to their backs - enabling every movement in and out of the hive to be recorded by laser scanners. Humans will be next. Barcodes are already used to tag babies in hospitals so alarms ring if an unauthorised person takes them out of the ward. Security guards are tracked by scanners reading barcodes to validate their routes. Sooner or later some bright spark will suggest that everyone should have their own barcode so they are recognised everywhere from bank cash machines to the front door of the office. It hasn't yet got to the stage of "I have a barcode therefore I am" but Descartes would surely have amended his proposition to take account of an age in which so much thinking is done for us.

Letters to the Editor

Talkback: new lines of attack

THE idea, as Jeremy Paul suggests (Letters, June 2), that "one can never be sure that no influence is being brought to bear" in the matter of book reviews and the Culture Shop number placed beneath them has been already brought to bear. The reviewer's opinion can be bought to imply that he or she is going to be paid enough to justify the sale. Well, not on this paper, we're not. The only influence Stephen Moss, my literary editor, ever brings to bear on me is to suggest that I buy him a pint when he takes me for a drink, on the grounds that he has "left" his wallet in his "other jacket". Which, when you think about it, is as far from corrupting his reviewers as it is possible to get. Nicholas Lezard, London.

HOW fascinating to read the views of Gary Rhodes on cars and women "Cars are the greatest thing in the world, but if they can't perform well, forget it" (Me and my motor, June 1). Can't you find people with something interesting to say? Dear Roberts, London.

YOUR headline "Hague alters line of attack" (June 2) leaves me confused. Was there a previous line of attack? If so, why were we not informed? John Ashwell, Eastleigh, Hants.

IT'S high time people stopped being rotten about Ann Widdecombe's alleged change of attitude to Michael Howard. Isn't it obvious that what she said was: "He has something of the knight about him?" Colin Attenborough, Ely, Cambs.

Why Gazza was kebabbed

ENGLAND are not going to France to win the World Cup (I was drunk the night before I was asked, June 2). Brazil, or some equally gifted bunch of individuals, will win it. The role of any England team in such circumstances is to lose gloriously. Taking away the main character, Gazza, is like trying to perform The Merry Wives of Windsor without Falstaff: it does not work as theatre.

World Cup football is not about 22 athletes on a field and bear on me is to suggest that I buy him a pint when he takes me for a drink, on the grounds that he has "left" his wallet in his "other jacket". Which, when you think about it, is as far from corrupting his reviewers as it is possible to get. Nicholas Lezard, London.

Glenn Hoddle has baringly taken away even the potential for that magic to be practised in France by exorcising Gazza, our favourite footy talisman. Like some austere Victorian nanny banishing fairies from the bottom of the garden. Bring

back Mary Poppins and send Hoddle to a monastery. Drucost Mackay, Twyford, Berkshire.

GLENN Hoddle said on television last night that he heard about the earthquake in Afghanistan and that "put it all in perspective". No wonder England are performing so poorly, when their coach thinks there's other things in life than football. He'll be telling us next it's only a game. John Carpenter, Morpeth, Northumberland.

ANYONE seeking an explanation for the yawning gulf in technique, fitness and what is now rather coyly referred to as "lifestyle management" between British footballers and their Italian (or German, or Brazilian, or Spanish, or French, or Norwegian) counterparts need look no further than the widespread surprise generated by the announcement by the coach of the national football team that he wants athletes in his squad. Nick Rider, London.

PAUL Gascoigne stumbles down the road and orders a kebab in a successful attempt to forestall his hangover. Else-

where, Alan Shearer washes down his Big Mac with a benzene-fuelled cola. Gazza is out but Shearer is in, carrying the nation's hopes. Have Glenn Hoddle and his dieticians got it all wrong? Phil Syrtis, Bristol.

ONE 150g portion of shish kebab with salad in pitta bread will provide only 34 per cent of its energy from fat. This is well within the Department of Health guidelines of fat intake to be no more than 30 per cent of total energy consumed.

Perhaps more emphasis should be placed on the damaging effects of cigarette smoking and excess alcohol consumption on Gazza's health. Emile Richman, Research dietitian, Fazakerley Hospital, Liverpool.

VIRGIN Radio offer a "New Listener's Hotline" for people to say what they like about it. Do you think they can be prevailed upon to offer an Ex-Listeners' Hotline for people such as myself put off by the arrogance of their proprietor in defending his drinking buddies and the way in which news bulletins reflect the proprietor's views? Jon Keen, Crowthorne, Berkshire.

ably, not since the Beatles have we seen a British group dominate the global market to such an extent.

The loss of one Spice Girl is unfortunate, but not terminal. The other four have stated their intention to carry on. In the end, the fans will determine whether the show will go on, not the music critics. Steve Housham, Skipton, North Yorks.



Which way do you vote on PR?

IN MAKING the case for proportional representation, Polly Toynbee (Comment, June 1) overlooks one crucial point: proportional representation means fairness between parties. This is not the same as fairness to voters.

In order to rebalance the democratic process away from party managers and spin doctors and back to the electors, we need a voting system that is broadly party proportional and extends voter choice. Fortunately, we have such a system in the UK already: the single transferable vote. Let us hope the voters of Northern Ireland use the electoral power STV gives them wisely, on June 25, when they express their preferences for members of the new assembly. Tom Ellis, Wrexham.

POLLY Toynbee is right to advocate proportional representation so that never again can an ideological minority hold a stranglehold on power for 18 years. But electors will see party lists as flocks of political sheep. Proportional representation is a denial of real democracy except in forms forcing every candidate to submit individually to the electorate. Frederic Stansfield, Canterbury, Kent.

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I may have hated your book but I'd like to lunch you

WHY DOES our Culture Secretary react (As T S Eliot said, May 29) to my review of his book, *Creative Britain*, rather than that of the better known David Hare, who said in the Observer that whoever was responsible for the style should be shot? All I said was that it was semi-literate. The reason is not that Mr Smith is under-educated, but the reverse. Our comfortably born, well-schooled Culture Secretary is a dismal example of English class contortion: hence his unclassy, contorted prose. Descending into banal little mental categories, Smith labels me an "unashamed elitist". For me, an elitist is someone who condescends, for example by writing that "The singers Roni Size and Jazzie B are putting black music on the map". As a former (sadly not very elite) jazz drummer, I found that both ignorant (Size and B are not singers) and pretentious. Who does Christopher Robert Smith PhD (Can-

tab) imagine he is talking down to? He should get together with David Blunkett, with whom I lunched recently at Blunkett's invitation. Is Labour's aim in culture and education to patronise, or do as Blunkett (no PhD) does, and strive upwards? How does it help him for Smith to write trashy books to ingratiate himself with the very people whose horizons his wiser colleague is trying to expand? I would be happy to lunch Smith, at my expense to spare the arts budget. We have much in common. He went to a fine direct grant school, as did I. He studied at Cambridge. So did I. He sees himself as a bold, anti-elitist spirit in a socialist government. Neither am I. George Walden, London.

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But is it art?

Mark Steel



OOK. He's not a tragically flawed, complex and contradictory genius enigma. He just got pissed and had a kebab. Van Gogh was tragic, because despite his talent he was depressed, skint and out of his ear. He wouldn't carry quite the same mystique if his low point was the night he split chilli sauce on the way home from the Amsterdam Rehebe Palace. Even if it was during the build-up to the world sun-

flower-painting championships. Nor would the film *Amadeus* have been quite as poignant, if it had been the story of how the royal court unfairly punished a great young musician by confiscating his plastic tits.

But every broadsheet editorial yesterday discussed the matter in earnest prose. And Monday's *Newsnight* began with a 20-minute item on the issue, including an interview with a psychologist. Maybe that shrink will end up on the World Cup expert summary will be for "Belgium to get back into this match, their midfield need to confront their repressed homosexuality. What do you reckon, Des?"

What's brought this on is the changing attitudes of the middle class towards sport, especially football. Cambridge graduates in the media have become devotees, when 10 years ago they'd have been proud not to know that it was

FA Cup Final day. But they don't want to appear as stobs, so they describe it as art, drama, theatre, tragedy, ballet and nouvelle cuisine.

Well it's not. The reason I enjoy going to football is not because it's art or theatre but because it's stupid. The brilliant thing about it is you don't have to think anything at all to enjoy it, except "Please, please go in their goal" and "Oh Christ, don't go in our goal." If the goalkeeper doesn't have much to do, you don't think "I wonder why the playwright included that character then. Perhaps he symbolises our fear of change."

Intellectuals have always tried to justify their passion for sport by classifying it as art. Even in the magnificent book *Beyond A Boundary*, included a bankers chapter which argued that cricket is an art. "What matters in cricket is not the end result but, as in all the arts... that individuality can flourish," he

claimed. But if a batsman presents a beautifully graceful square cut a split second too early, he might be clean bowled. And what would the MOC have to say if he yelled at the umpire "But that shot was a metaphor for the decay in modern free thinking, which makes it a no-ball, you Philistines."

Clearly sport reflects society, but that doesn't make it art. Viv Richards's threatening panther-like posture at the wicket was, in its contrast to the upright English stance, an anti-imperialist statement. Steve Davis made himself popular in the Eighties not because he was a Tory but because he played like a Tory: turgid, heartless and con-

cerned only with amassing maximum points, without even pretending that some of them may trickle down to the other players. But reflecting is not the same as expressing. Similarly, the attempts to make Olympic competitions out of activities like ice skat-

ing and dancing with a hoop result in events which are neither sport nor art. Otherwise anything could become a sport if you got a row of judges to give marks to it. You could have Olympic ironing, with commentators yelling "Stir's done so well on the sleeves that the Russian judge has given her five point nine."

THE MOST common accusation made against sport, especially cricket, from people who aren't interested in it, is that it's pointless. To which there are two possible answers. One is to claim that to witness a Bergkamp goal or a Lara century is like experiencing a Yeats poem, a John Coltrane solo, etc. etc.

The other is to agree. For that is where the passion, drama and excitement of sport ultimately comes from: its utter pointlessness. What sort of useless sport would it be that had a point to it? Premier League shopping perhaps?

Then even if you lose you've got all your vegetables for the week.

Sports stars can be incredibly talented, innovative and breathtaking, but they're not geniuses. They're just either better or worse than their opponents. They can, however, be tragic. But that requires more than being upset because the manager doesn't think you're fit enough. I don't know much about Shakespeare, but I doubt whether any of his tragedies revolve around a character called Hoddle calling a soldier into a room and saying "Geordie, I bear thee sad tidings. Thou goest not to France, for the larger and kebab had swilled thine paunch such that the 90 minutes battle shall be 85 too long." Following which everyone somehow ends up stabbed.

If you're middle class and have been converted to the joys of watching sport, that's fine. But come to terms with it. You're a slob like the rest of us.

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FinanceGuardian

Building society pays £5 million to escape clutches of Royal Bank Midshires braced for bids

Julia Finch and Liz Stuart

BIRMINGHAM Midshires Building Society was last night bracing itself for an outbreak of competing bids as it finally freed itself from the clutches of the Royal Bank of Scotland.

The Midshires paid £5 million, £5 per member, to the RBS yesterday lunchtime to end a £350 million takeover deal agreed with the bank last August.

The Wolverhampton-based society is now free to start formal talks with the Halifax — which has already said it is willing to pay £780 million for the society. The Halifax bid would generate a windfall payment of £750 for each Midshires member.

A spokesman said the society is also expecting other bidders to emerge or is willing to go it alone and float on

the Stock Exchange as a separately listed bank if it cannot find a partner that will preserve jobs, retain its name, give it autonomy — and pay the right price.

A sale to another financial organisation would be the cheapest option and the society admitted that a deal with a third party was "the preferred option".

Potential bidders rumoured to be interested include the Allied Irish Bank, which recently bought Bristol and West building society, Bank of Ireland and Lloyds TSB. But the Halifax is still the only known bidder.

If a deal with the Halifax is eventually negotiated, the Midshires will have to pay an additional £10 million to the RBS. The extra payment will not apply to any other potential bidder.

The Midshires described the additional payment demanded by the RBS in the event of a deal with the Hal-

ifax as "small minded". The spokesman said: "We are paying it under duress. We don't think it is fair, but it is the only way for us to get out of this and move forward."

The £5 million payment is okay, but the demand for an extra £10 million is the result of small-minded egos. It is spiteful."

A deal with the Halifax should not be taken for granted, however. The terms of its takeover agreement with the RBS had prevented any detailed discussions to take place and the Midshires last night said it will consider all other offers.

The society's spokesman said it would not necessarily favour the highest bid. "We will take approaches from all-comers", he said. "We will then sift through them and choose a partner according to price, job preservation and brand preservation. This is not about slash and burn."

The Halifax has promised to retain the Midshires name for three years and has only said that it would "attempt to manage the merger" without compulsory redundancies. Ironically, Halifax has been widely rumoured to have been in merger talks with RBS, although neither side would comment.

Insiders at Lloyds said chief executive Peter Elwood was not interested in acquiring the Midshires because it is too small.

Analysts also doubted whether the Midshires would attract many additional bids. Several pointed out that the value of mortgage banks had declined since the Halifax tabled its offer and said they did not believe higher bids were likely.

Midshires denies that the original deal with RBS was poorly negotiated. "At the time we were valued by JP Morgan," said the spokesman.

Countdown to a get-out

August 1997: Royal Bank of Scotland announces it is in exclusive talks to buy Birmingham Midshires for up to £630 million.

March 1998: Details of talks between Halifax and Midshires leak out. Halifax confirms it has offered £780 million for the society.

April: Birmingham Midshires offers Royal Bank of Scotland £5 million to release it from the exclusive takeover agreement.

May: It emerges that, to free Birmingham Midshires from the deal, the Royal Bank of Scotland demands an extra £10 million if the Halifax bid goes ahead.

June: Midshires confirms it has agreed to the £10 million condition. The deal with the Royal Bank of Scotland is officially called off and the society is free to talk to other bidders.

Notebook

GEC puts itself over a gun barrel



Edited by Alex Brummer

THE notation of GEC's intently-owned power unit, GEC Alsthom, is the most significant move by Britain's leading manufacturing company since Lord Simpson took the helm in September 1996. Lord Simpson was never keen on the joint ventures he inherited and has been eager to simplify them while concentrating GEC's future on its core electronics and defence businesses, largely in the GEC-Marconi division.

The joint ventures were put together by the company's creator, Lord Westwood, in 1989-90, both as means of deterring predators and because he realised that globalisation meant that even the biggest national champions needed partners.

Of the three joint ventures he formed at the time, GEC Alsthom, GDA in the goods sector and GPT (the joint venture with Siemens) in telecoms, the power venture was undoubtedly the most commercially successful. The group established itself as a market leader as a producer of trains — the TGV is perhaps its best known product — and as a maker of the most efficient combined cycle turbines in the world.

It was particularly adept at selling power units into fast-growing Asian markets. In many ways the power arm of GEC was the star and ensured that the UK had a global presence in both the train-making and power industries.

This is the business which GEC is now unloading. It is initially selling 50.3 per cent of the shares through a public offering that values the enterprise at up to £4.5 billion and will allow GEC to take a cash dividend likely to be in excess of £800 million. The timing is useful. It is the first big share offering by a large private sector manufacturer in Europe for some time and comes when equity markets are at or close to their peaks.

The downside for potential buyers will be the vulnerability of the new company to Asian markets where it has large order books.

Lord Simpson hopes to redeploy some of the capital into GEC Marconi, with the possibility of bidding for bits of the US defence industry or eventually carving out that elusive deal with old adversary, British Aerospace.

All of this is certainly more exciting for GEC shareholders than they were used to under the previous management. But critics, looking across the international horizon, might question the logic of cashing-in a hugely successful, peaceful manufacturing business — where the Anglo-French nature of the company has been advantageous — so as to focus more closely on the defence

businesses when governments from Washington to London are busy scaling down military budgets.

The new GEC will be ever more dependent on selling weapons systems into emerging markets: not an alluring prospect given what has been seen in Indonesia and the Indian sub-continent. As GEC's emeritus chairman Lord Westwood contemplates a new career as the largest shareholder in a Bond Street antique retailer, he may be puzzling over the direction taken by his successor.

Fool's gold

THE 14 per cent jump in profits of the National Lottery operator Camelot was never going to be welcome. The lottery occupies a special place in the national psyche and any cash that accrues to the commercial sector is going to be an easy target. Given these circumstances, Camelot does not help itself with its over-generous and less than transparent approach to remuneration.

The overall amount paid to directors in the latest financial year is barely up at £2.4 million. But this is a misleading figure, in that it starts from the previous year's swollen base. Moreover, when the figures are broken down, the lottery bosses continue to cock-a-snook at the public with the lacklustre chief executive Tim Holey claiming an 8 per cent increase to £336,000 — almost twice the level of increase in average earnings.

This is very foolish on a number of counts. Although Camelot was no more than an onlooker in the libel action between Richard Branson and Guy Snowden, former boss of GTP, the court battle focused attention on Camelot's performance and the licence renewal. Given that the company is now so much in the public eye, it has a responsibility to act more ethically than anyone else.

The real question for the government to ask is whether a successor could do better? Certainly, technologically the system has been virtually flawless — which is more than can be said for some of Richard Branson's enterprises, most notably Virgin Rail.

As Camelot has pointed out, the efficiency of its operation, which produced a higher yield than the average of the world's leading lotteries, led to an extra £330 million raised for good causes last year. Moreover, it is now also giving the interest earned on unclaimed prizes to charity, yielding a further £5 million.

Could anyone else do it better? There are public sector institutions, most notably the Post Office, which perform profitably and efficiently. There are also mutual building societies, which have demonstrated that they can be more successful than the newly converted banks, by returning excess profits to members.

If Camelot could demonstrate a more caring sharing approach, rather than being so focused on enriching directors and shareholders, it might command more public support.

Chancellor will get euro elbow

Stephen Bates in Brussels

GORDON Brown faces a humiliating humiliation tomorrow at the hands of Britain's European partners when he will be excluded formally from the first private meeting of the 11 finance ministers whose countries are participating in the single currency.

The Chancellor, who has claimed repeatedly that Britain is taking a central place in Europe, is expected to say a few anodyne words before he has to leave.

Mr Brown is attending the meeting of the so-called Euro-XI committee in his capacity as chairman of the finance ministers' council during the British presidency of the EU but will leave when the 11 get down to discussing the launch of the currency.

He will be allowed to remain only while the rest talk about formal establishment of the body. The Chancellor's opening remarks will be expected to do no more than welcome Euro-XI.

The British Government fought strongly to prevent the establishment of what UK ministers privately insist will be an informal, unimportant gathering. Participating states say, however, that the body will take policy decisions on interest rates and monetary policy which are bound to affect Britain.

"When it is set up, he [Mr Brown] will leave it to its work," said Dominique Strauss-Kahn, France's finance minister and the main champion of the new committee.

Britain's attempt to block establishment of the Euro-XI committee ended in the "Lux-

embourg compromise", agreed at last December's summit after a row between Britain and France.

That agreement allows non-participating countries to attend meetings when issues of interest to them are discussed — although at what point they will be called in, or who will decide what their interests are, has not been settled.

Tomorrow's meeting will take place in the elegant surroundings of Senningen castle in Luxembourg.

The committee will meet monthly, shadowing the regular meetings of Ecofin, the finance ministers' committee in which all 15 states take part.

Mr Brown will be replaced in the chair by Rudolph Enderlein, finance minister of Austria, which takes over presidency of the EU from Britain on July 1.

Britain will not be allowed to attend next month's meeting although the four "out" countries will be able to sit in on September's gathering so they can see what they are missing.

On the agenda for tomorrow's meeting is an analysis of the macro-economic conditions against which the Euro-zone's budgets are operating and the prospects for next year, when the currency will get under way.

The participating 11 will then adjourn for a celebratory dinner and ritual press conference before joining the four "out" countries — Britain, Sweden, Denmark and Greece — for the formal Ecofin meeting the following day.

What will Mr Brown do after he is shown the door at Senningen? "I suppose he'll go and have dinner in Luxembourg," a diplomatic source said.

Pastures new for Poirot



On the case: Hercule Poirot (played by David Suchet) is flanked by Hastings and Japp in the TV adaptation of the tales

Booker to arrest profits decline

Roger Cowe unmasks Agatha Christie sale as group concentrates on food

FOOD group Booker yesterday unveiled a break-up which could see the famous name disappear as a public company. The disposal programme will see the sale of rights to Agatha Christie's books as well as the disposal of a string of peripheral businesses in food and agribusiness. But Booker will still sponsor Britain's most prestigious literary prize, which bears its name.

Once the disposal programme has been completed, chairman Jonathan Taylor will step down after nearly 40 years with the

company. He will hand over to Alan Smith, the present deputy chairman who led the review of group operations.

Booker has to choose between four candidates as chief executive, a post vacant since March when Charles Bowen paid the penalty for underperformance. Mr Taylor said the group had been too ambitious in making the Nurdin & Peacock takeover at the same time as a huge UK reorganisation.

A decision to focus on the near-£5 billion food distribution business follows a

review of strategy and was accompanied by a third profit warning in a year. Booker said that business has been poor so far this year and six-month profits will be "substantially below" last year's.

Last year profits had already fallen by almost a fifth. This year's are likely to be even lower than was expected three months ago and the dividend payment will be cut.

After reviewing the group's businesses, which range from salmon farming in the Atlantic to poultry breeding in the US, the board decided to concentrate on cash-and-carry operations and a growing UK distribution business to restaurants.

Deputy chairman Alan Smith said: "In food distribution we are the leading player in a big market. We have made substantial investment in it in recent years which we believe will yield benefits. It is appropriate to drive it forward as the core business."

But he admitted that the board might agree to sell out in one of a number of potential buyers who have expressed an interest.

"If that is the right route forward, there are no sacred cows," he said.

Booker is now close to a sale of its 66 per cent interest in Agatha Christie Ltd, which owns rights to the famous detective tales, featuring Belgian Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple.

Jakarta contract restored to Thames

David Gow

THAMES Water International yesterday won back its lucrative contract to supply water to half of Jakarta, the Indonesian capital, after severing its links with a company controlled by the dictator, President Suharto.

Last month, after Mr Suharto's enforced resignation, Thames lost the contract when it became the first foreign casualty of the new regime's campaign to strip the ex-president's family of their nepotistically-acquired assets, said to have totalled £20 billion during 32 years of Suharto rule.

Yesterday, insisting the contract had merely been put on hold, Thames announced it had signed an agreement with the Indonesian authorities to

resume "over the next few days" operational and administrative control of the water supply in the eastern half of Jakarta.

It dumped its partner, PT Kelakapala Airindo, chaired by Sigit Harjojudanto, Mr Suharto's eldest son, which had a 20 per cent shareholding in the joint venture.

Thames, which said Sigit's firm had provided local back-up in winning the contract, said it is seeking another partner. "Under Indonesian law all foreign firms had to have a minimum 5 per cent local holding and they all had links to the ex-president's family," a spokeswoman said.

She added: "What was right ten days ago has now changed and the partner arrangements have changed too. The real issue is the long-term viability of the contract."

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Cyprus 0.8372	Ireland 1.259	Norway 12.02	Switzerland 23.57
Denmark 10.89	Israel 5.888	Portugal 260.33	Turkey 142.450
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Tesco takes on pension firms

Rupert Jones

AFTER mounting an assault on the high street banks, Tesco is taking on the pensions industry by becoming the first supermarket to sell personal plans.

The pension plan, which will be a low-cost index-tracker, is being tested in 20 Tesco stores across Britain before a nationwide roll-out "in the coming months".

Tesco has linked with insurer Scottish Widows for the venture and will offer customers telephone advice on pension planning. Its plan costs from £20 a month and the retailer is tempting customers by offering 1,000 Clubcard points to those who sign up.

The retailer's personal finance division was launched in July 1997 and in seven months signed up more than 500,000 customers. The most popular product has been its savings account, which pays 6.5 per cent gross interest on a minimum deposit of £1.

Tesco may find that its cus-

tomers take a lot more convincing when it comes to taking out a pension. Marks & Spencer, the only other big retailer to offer pensions, has fewer than 3,000 policies in force, even though it has been selling them since May 1995.

"It has been slow," an M&S spokesman admitted, but added: "We believe the market is definitely growing."

Tesco said it was offering a "simple, easy-to-understand, penalty-free plan" which was adaptable to people's changing circumstances. Customers can choose from five index-tracker funds, including one which reflects performance of the FTSE All-Share, and there are no penalties for reducing or stopping payments. There is also a one-month money-back guarantee.

This is the third personal finance product that Tesco has introduced in a month. Home insurance went on sale at the end of April and personal loans followed two weeks ago. No other announcements were imminent, the spokesman said.

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compared preparations for this tournament unfavorably with four years ago. "The 1994 team had played through the qualifiers and two years. This time we are trying to achieve in the weeks that we previously did in two years," he said.

Although Zaslavski's performance in the Atlanta Olympic Games was not as good as he had hoped, he was still a player to watch. He showed he was still a player to watch. He showed he was still a player to watch.

The decision not to play in the Atlanta Olympic Games was a disappointment for Zaslavski. He had been a player to watch. He showed he was still a player to watch. He showed he was still a player to watch.

It is not necessary to fall back on the misleading caricature of Atherton as Captain Mope to insist that he cuts a more relaxed figure these days. He is even making runs for Lancashire again.

The county cricket that had become a blind has, in the past month, been a necessary proving ground. He has even spoken of early-season butterflies and, like the Lundy Cabage, they have been close to extinction for years.

At his lowest moments in the past four years — whether his back hurt, his team lost, or arguments raged about the soil in his pocket — Atherton vaguely contemplated retirement a few years down the line. He wondered about what profession he could follow to avoid wandering with no great passion into cricket writing or commentating.

The Guardian Wednesday June 3 1998

David Hopps finds the former Test captain refreshed and raring to go as he ponders life back in the ranks

THERE are occasions to feel extraordinarily grateful for Michael Atherton's sense of proportion. Since his replacement as England captain, following a defeat in the West Indies that hit him hard, there have been no reports of binge-drinking with pseudo-personalities, nor even the appearance of a boozy mate supposedly in possession of five bottles to inform the world what a disaster had befallen it.

For those yearning for a saner and more discriminating approach to life than Planet Football, Atherton's conduct offers an opportunity to denounce the overblown inanities of the global game and suggest that cricket is still capable of providing a lesson or two.

All Atherton has done since his career ran aground is to reflect awhile, draw some conclusions and get on with life. He has a holiday, chat with real friends, spend some time correcting his batting technique — everyday things that he understandably assumes should not be of the slightest interest in anybody but himself.

He has never had much truck with the image-makers, an unyielding attitude that during his captaincy often seemed bloody-minded. Yesterday it was almost endearing. With the first Cornhill Test against South Africa slightly more than a day away, he was reluctant to interrupt his respite among the ranks.

"I've said far too much in the past four years," came the low-key suggestion. In truth, except in his more private and amenable moments, every pronouncement has been tweezered out of him like a splinter from a swollen finger.

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Retrieved, he is now talking about playing deep into the next century. "I'm only 30, in the same age group as Nasser Hussain and Mark Ramprakash," he said, "and they are still referred to as up-and-comers. I still think I have plenty of cricket left in me. I think I can play for another five years."

The senior professional's role will come easily to him, especially as Alec Stewart, depicted five years ago as a street-smart rival for the England captaincy, is a player



Captain Mope and Smart Alec... 'I think I can help without being too obtrusive,' Atherton said yesterday. MARTIN ARNOLD

Atherton happy to lie back and think of England

whom he greatly respects, and one who approaches the game with the same unrelenting professionalism. The major difference is that Stewart has fewer bad-hair days.

"As captain you think about the other players a lot," Atherton said. "You can't suddenly become insular. I think I can help without being too obtrusive. Alec has always been competitive. He plays it hard and I'm sure he will bring those qualities to the captaincy."

Time for Atherton to address the faults in his own

game has been essential. Since his heroic match-saving effort in Johannesburg in December 1995, 26 Tests have brought only two hundreds at a modest 31.58. Feet that always moved sparingly began to look increasingly jaded. A batsman whom it had seemed impossible to wear down was made of sandstone where once there had been granite.

Form for Lancashire initially eluded him but a 90 in the AXA League against Derbyshire nearly four weeks ago pointed the way to better things. He did not receive,

not expect, a special phone call about his selection (he largely regards them as a waste of time anyway) and only checked that he had been selected when he turned on Teletext on Sunday evening. He was not about to make a fuss about it.

"One phase of my career is over," he reflected. "Now it is time to invent another phase. Things are not much different. I have to remember not to sign my name at the top of the bat now. Graham Gooch used to do that to me after I took over the captaincy from him."

He used to keep apologising for it. Atherton was the type to shrug and cram his name in at the top, even scrawl it lower down. Stewart, though, has such a fastidious reputation that he will probably order a replacement bat.

Atherton has been amused by Lord MacLaurin's suggestion that a change of captaincy will herald the start of a smarter era. He might not quite manage the polished shoes but it is good to see him shining up his smile again.



McMillan... fighting fit

Rhodes, 29 next month, is said to be growing in cricketing maturity. He covers, pouncing with panther leaps and occasionally returning the ball with the acrobatic comic, off-balance dexterity of a p-faced circus performer.

The South Africans have plenty going for them, not least the refreshed vigour and menace of their new-ball attack. In fact, one of the few worries remaining is that shadowy No. 6 position. Self-effacingly, Rhodes says: "If I don't get in this time, maybe I shall later in the series."

Russian Pavel Tonkov. After 12 days in the pink jersey Alex Zülle of Switzerland slipped to fourth. Italy's Mario Cipollini withdrew yesterday with gastro-enteritis.

Athletics
The hurdler Colin Jackson has had to postpone his return to long jumping because the event has been withdrawn from a meeting in Milan on Friday.

Cycling
Marco Pantani gave Italians what they had dreamed of for four years when he took the lead in the Giro d'Italia yesterday. The shaven-headed rider finished second in the demanding 17th stage in the Southern Tyrol to Giuseppe Guerini but took the overall lead by 30 seconds from the

Ice Hockey
The Sheffield Steelers' owner George Dodds yesterday handed over £100,000 to enable the financially troubled Superleague side to play on, writes Vic Batchelder. Steelers hope that Don McKee, coach of the Canadian university

Sailing
A day after the Round the World Race lost Whitbread and became the Volvo Ocean Race the first challenger commissioned its training yacht, writes Bob Fisher. In New York the 110-ton Pinta challenge will use a One-Design 48 class; similar boats led the

Rugby Union

England suffer Test loss of Dawson

Ian Maflin

ENGLAND face the already daunting task of taking on Australia in Brisbane this Saturday with a half-back pairing that has played a grand total of two minutes of full international rugby.

In the latest setback to Clive Woodward's injury-ravaged squad the new captain Matt Dawson was ruled out of the Test yesterday with a knee ligament strain.

Gloucester's scrum-half Scott Hastings steps in to become the fifth new cap in the side.

He will be paired with Jonny Wilkinson, the Newcastle reserve who passed his 19th birthday only last month and who was a last-minute substitute on the wing against Ireland at Twickenham in April. The Saracens No. 8 Tony Diprose takes over the captaincy.

The 23-year-old Bradford-born Benton, understudy to Dawson in the last two games of this year's Five Nations Championship, joins the Richmond wing Spencer Brown, the Saracens pair Steve Ravenscroft and Ben Stanham and the Sale flanker Pat Sanderson in making his debut.

Woodward said: "The strain means that Matt will be 95 per cent fit, but I am only

going to pick players who are 100 per cent."

Dawson was appointed captain for the demanding tour to Australia, New Zealand and South Africa when Lawrence Dallaglio withdrew because of a persistent shoulder problem. Dawson, who played for the Lions in South Africa last summer, had been due to win his 12th cap.

Leicester's Austin Healey will be a scrum-half replacement and the Richmond wing Dominic Chapman also comes on to the bench. Alex King of Wasps replaces Bristol's Josh Lewsey, who has been with drawn as a replacement to allow him to concentrate on his university finals.

Woodward added: "Josh felt he could not fully focus on the Test match with his finals still hanging over him. I decided it was best for him to sit this match out and let him concentrate on his exams."

"They finish shortly and he will then be available for the remaining matches of the Test match with his finals still hanging over him. I decided it was best for him to sit this match out and let him concentrate on his exams."

Bunce will meet the New Zealand Rugby Football Union chief executive David Moffett next week to discuss his contractual obligations.

and physical exhaustion. "I intend putting on pressure behind the scenes so that players play the right number of games," he said. "If they don't, then they won't be in the England party. I would like to think the situation we've found ourselves in this season, with so many players being unavailable to tour, won't happen again. We have learnt a massive lesson from it."

England's next Test opponents New Zealand are rebuilding. The All Blacks, already without their totum captain Sean Fitzpatrick, whose knee injury has forced him into retirement this year, have handed Canterbury's centre Mark Mayherhofer the chance to succeed another veteran, their 36-year-old centre Frank Bunce.

Mayherhofer has moved off the New Zealand Barbarians replacements bench for next week's All Blacks trial. Bunce, capped 55 times, has almost certainly played his last Test match. Burns, the scrum-half, is being drawn from the trial after failing to prove his fitness and has also just returned from France, where he has agreed a six-figure, two-year deal with Castres.

Bunce will meet the New Zealand Rugby Football Union chief executive David Moffett next week to discuss his contractual obligations.

Bowling in the frame as Cardiff and Evans part

Paul Rees

CARDIFF have parted company with their rugby director Alex Evans 12 months into a four-year contract worth £480,000.

Despite assembling the most expensive squad in Wales with 24 full internationals, Cardiff won nothing last season under the former assistant Australia coach, who was in charge of Wales in the 1995 World Cup. Evans had a successful first period in charge at the Arms Park between 1992 and 1995.

There was reported player discontent, with individuals signed in between Evans's departure and his return said to be unhappy at his coaching methods and his favoured style of play, which was based on forward supremacy.

Evans returned to Brisbane last month for a five-week holiday. In his absence Cardiff's board of directors decided to offer him terms for staying in Australia and the Cardiff chief executive Gareth Davies yesterday returned from a trip there for negotiations.

Davies denied that Evans had been sacked, saying he had been talking with Alex about his future involvement with the club.

Cardiff are talking with Evans about the size of his pay-off, understood to be £150,000, and the statement is likely to say Evans is remaining in Australia for family reasons. Cardiff, though, are said to have held talks with

Kevin Bowling, who last month vacated his position as the national coach of Wales.

Bowling is still negotiating his severance with Wales who were threatening Richmond with sanctions following the eleven-hour withdrawal yesterday of the club's centre Allan Bateman from the tour of Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Wales fly to Harare today but Bateman will be having an operation on his nose, having been told by Richmond that, if he toured with Wales, he would have to wait until his contract ended in two years before he would be

allowed to have surgery.

"Having successfully appealed to the Rugby Football Union and Richmond for Allan's release, it now appears undue pressure has been placed on the player to withdraw from the tour after allegedly agreeing to release him from the tour," said a Welsh Rugby Union spokesman.

Bateman, who has a contract with both Richmond and the WRU, said he had been put in an impossible position. The WRU will ask the RFU to take action against Richmond either in the form of a large fine or docking the club league points next season.

Burns stands out for Scotland but the locals are unimpressed

SCOTLAND's second successive victory in Australia failed to impress the natives: "soft" was the hard verdict on the tourists after they had beaten New South Wales Country 34-13 in Bathurst yesterday.

Scotland's side scored five tries to two as they distanced themselves further from the 51-26 Test defeat by Fiji in Suva last week but the former Wallaby scrum-half Steve Merries predicted the Scots would be crushed by Australia in the Tests in Sydney on Saturday week and Brisbane on June 20. "They were a bit soft and they're going to get smashed," he said.

Graeme Burns, Rowen

Shepherd, Gregor Townsend and Jim McMillan scored for the Scots, who were also awarded a penalty try, and Andrew Hurrey scored both the Country XV's tries.

Scotland's coach Jim Tait said the team would be disappointed that the scrum-half, for his defence. It will need to continue on Saturday they face the night of Super 12 opposition, New South Wales in Sydney.

Scotland's coach Warren Gatland has made 13 changes to the team for their second tour match in South Africa, against South Western District in George today. Shannon's Anthony Foley will captain the side.

Boxing

Eubank rematch fears

John Rawlings

ONLY three months after a savage first meeting, Chris Eubank and Carl Thompson will once more contest the World Boxing Organisation cruiserweight title. The fight, at the Sheffield Arena on July 18, could be another epic but will worry many who harbour concerns for the long-term future of the sport and the fighters involved.

In Thompson's narrow points victory in Manchester, the retention of his title seemed an irrelevance as the two men were locked in a brutal struggle, the equal of anything seen in Britain in recent years.

It was Eubank's first foray into the division, having previously held world titles at middleweight and super-middleweight, and he won new respect for his bravery against a bigger opponent. But afterwards many suggested retirement was the sensible option for him after a career estimated to have generated as much as £15 million.

The memory of Eubank hurling punches at his opponent, his left eye clamped closed by an ugly red mass of bruising, when all logic suggested surrender remains a vivid and indelible image.

Cornermen had to lift him off his stool to throw him back into the fray. A further wave of cash was his only reward and it was a relief to

learn he had suffered no lasting damage after spending two nights in hospital.

It was an ageing, debilitating contest, the kind which left seasoned observers mesmerised but wincing at ring-side as the blows rained home. Fighters, as anyone who watched Muhammad Ali on television last week would concur, can take only so much.

The courage of the fighting man is an intangible quality, and boxing is littered with hard-luck stories of those who refused to accept the ravages of time — men who searched for one last fix of adulation and cash only to pay the price.

Soon after losing to Thompson Eubank appeared on the footballer Ian Wright's television programme to say he

would be taking part in a rematch on July 18. The following day, one week after Spencer Oliver's career ended with a brain injury, the promoter Frank Warren said: "No way."

But Naseem Hamed's unavailability to defend his title due to a hand injury has provoked a rethink and critics of the sport may justifiably ask why. The British Boxing Board of Control will have sought medical assurances that Eubank and Thompson are fit to fight but must have been tempted to say: by all means do it again, but wait.

With three fighters suffering serious brain injuries in a British ring in the last year, boxing remains on the back foot. Eubank-Thompson II will be a huge draw but at what cost?

Cricket

Test and Scores

0930 16 13 +

Counties update

Derbyshire	24	Middlesex	33
Durham	25	Northants	34
Essex	26	Nottingham	35
Glamorgan	27	Somerset	36
Gloucestershire	28	Surrey	37
Hampshire	29	Sussex	38
Kent	30	Warwickshire	39
Lancashire	31	Worcestershire	40
Leicestershire	32	Yorkshire	41

Complete County scores

0930 16 13 23

CHALKHILL STADIUM, LONDON. TEST, 1ST DAY. 1998

0930 16 13 23

The Guardian

INTERACTIVE

society

Every Wednesday in the

The Guardian

SportsGuardian

French Open: Swiss triumphs in battle of the 17-year-olds



It ends in tears... Venus Williams hit some 100mph shots but Hingis was up to speed. PHOTOGRAPHS: LAURENT REBOURS AND CLIVE BRUNSILL

The world No.1 switches off the power of Venus Williams at Roland Garros

Stephen Bierley reports from Paris

Hingis gives no quarter

MARTINA HINGIS underlined her position as the undisputed Queen of the Centre Court of Roland Garros yesterday when she reached the semi-finals of the French Open with a compelling 6-3, 6-4 victory over Venus Williams.

These two 17-year-olds are currently rated the hottest properties in tennis, with the American striving to displace the Swiss at the top of the women's game.

The anticipation and tension were immense, with the packed Parisian crowd all too aware that they might be about to witness a shift of balance at the top.

A win for Williams and the sublime reign of Hingis as the world's No.1 would have been seen as under direct and immediate threat.

This was power versus craft, severity versus subtlety. Intermittently Williams hit winners of astonishing velocity and on occasions she served at well over 100 mph, but Hingis was a picture of composed excellence, one miserable first-set service game excepted.

Hingis will tomorrow play

Monica Seles, the former three-times French Open champion, for a place in Saturday's final.

Seles, whose father Karol died of stomach cancer three weeks ago, discovered something of her relentless form of old to defeat Jana Novotna of the Czech Republic 4-6, 6-3, 6-3 and is clearly running high on emotion.

A year ago Hingis lost the final when Croatia's Iva Majoli ran her ragged. Hingis was still recovering from a riding accident at the time, and not fully fit, but Majoli provided a template for those hoping to beat the little Swiss wonder.

Williams immediately began to move Hingis from side to side and threatened to break her opening service game.

Significantly Hingis held firm and then took a 3-0 lead with the American displaying clear signs of nerves, much as she had last autumn in the US Open final which Hingis won in straight sets. At one point she actually dropped her racket while serving.

An excruciatingly poor service game by Hingis, including two double faults, saw

Williams close to 3-2 and animate a somewhat subdued crowd. Maybe they had simply over-lunched, which is a regular hazard at these championships.

If Williams had hoped Hingis would now be similarly sleepy she was to be disappointed.

A misjudgment by the American, allowing a Hingis cross-court shot to drop in, and then a stunning backhand pass, saw the No.1 re-establish a two-game lead, and run away with the first set.

A gusty wind did not help Williams's cause and two double faults midway through the second set saw Hingis make the decisive break.

With Hingis about to serve for the match, Williams took a bathroom break, which are fast becoming the bane of the game, and clearly being abused by certain players.

"It did not bother me," said Hingis. "It allowed me to relax while she had to walk there and back, which might have tired her."

A backhand error by Williams saw Hingis leaving the court clutching a white rose handed to her by a spectator.

In tomorrow's other semi-final Lindsay Davenport of the United States will play Arantxa Sanchez Vicario.

The Spaniard, twice champion here, defeated another Swiss player, Patty Schnyder, 6-2, 6-7, 6-0 while Davenport knocked out Majoli, the reigning champion, 6-1, 5-7, 6-3.



Only a dream and now Gazumped



Paul Weaver

PLEASE do not take this the wrong way, dear reader, but you are a bloody fool. And so am I. So are we all, a bunch of chuckleheads the lot of us. Suddenly the decision made by Glenn Hoddle, following his little spleen-to-spleen with Paul Gascoigne, seems startlingly sensible, his logic irrefutable, his managerial authority restored after some worryingly wobbly weeks.

So why did we do it to ourselves? What possessed us ever to think that a footballer who can display the mentality of a larger lout and the physique of an aspiring sumo wrestler, could ever win us the World Cup?

I do not wish to have a go at the downwardly mobile Gazza, even if he has shurped enough hooch to make Rabelais wince and float Hoddle's entire squad down the Swanee. I do not wish to have a go at Gazza because the game is a long one and the rotten-fruit-and-stones stalls are busier than Oxford Street in Christmas week.

Besides, we know all about the booze and the fags and the girl that follows like an America's Cup yachtmaker. We know, too, that he is at an age when it becomes difficult to burn the candle at even one end.

No, forget about Gazza because we all know he is a bloody fool and, anyway, I want to talk about us and why we pinch our dreams to any old broken-down wagon that rolls along.

The anger we feel today, the sense of being betrayed by a footballer with a liking for moonshine and rowdy mates, is really directed at ourselves because we have duped ourselves.

We watched Gascoigne struggle with Rangers and toll with Middlesbrough and huff and puff with England in Casablanca while his flesh peeled away from his bones like a piece of Kleenex.

But no, we kept a tight grip on our little dream. We even allowed ourselves to remain in denial when we saw pictures of Gazza enjoying a few jars of neck-oil with his chums Chris Evans, who once described the Spice Girls as the best band in the world and

would appear to know as much about football, and Danny Baker, wearing one of those garish ties that is cunningly designed to camouflage vomit.

The feeling today is one of postponed disappointment. It evokes that passage from childhood in which we started to sense that Santa Claus was a sham but somehow convinced ourselves that it was more comfortable to go on believing for a few more months until the suspicion became a blunt reality.

The fact is that in this age of lost innocence, of rampant cynicism, an age when Sondheim's lyrics resonate more emphatically than Hammett's, there is still a need to dream, an even greater need to hope.

Scientists have performed rather cruel experiments on cats, waking them when they start to dream. The cats died. So would we. We all need to dream, at night and in daylight too, and sport is a safer vehicle for escapism than many others.

SPORT is about romance and nostalgia, imagination and vicariousness; and, if we sometimes allow ourselves to slip into sentimental reverie, we should not take it out on the fawned and the fawned when we return to the real world.

The most popular form of delusion is the one in which we think an outstanding sportsman can suddenly relive old glories, that history can clear its throat and give us an encore.

We did it with Ian Botham, another not totally unfamiliar with an occasional glass of phlegm-cutter. Long after that great cricketer was past his best we would flock to him, waiting for the explosion from the extinct volcano. Or an Easter Island statue to come to life. Botham, like Gascoigne, played for England when he might have been more profitably positioned in the Museum of the Moving Image.

So we should not go around moping, looking as miserable as Schopenhauer when the toast has landed marmalade-down on the Wilton. We should not hang on about Gascoigne throwing it away because in our hearts we always knew that this was a footballer as fragile as Humpty Dumpty with a bout of vertigo.

The overwhelming emotion this morning is one of quiet sadness, of realisation that a once promising talent may never be fulfilled. Just what will Chris Evans do now? Or Danny Baker?

Transport by Nick Marks

1. Remove clothing. 2. Remove partner's clothing. 3. Grab a pack of Nicky Marks Sport Protein Snaxpods from the new Sport range. 4. Massage into wet hair the rich, satisfying combination of Vitamin E, Wheat protein and Pro Vitamin B5. 5. Rinse. 6. Enjoy. Don't get carried away.



Romario ruled out of World Cup

INJURY has put Brazil's Romario out of the World Cup, leaving the champions with only three specialist strikers.

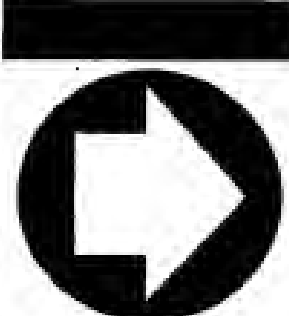
Romario, a key figure in Brazil's triumph in the United States in 1994, had two scans on his damaged right calf at the weekend and they revealed that it would take up to a month to heal.

News of Romario's withdrawal came as Brazil prepared for today's warm-up match against Andorra. He

has been replaced in the squad by an inexperienced defensive midfielder, Emerson Ferreira of Bayer Leverkusen.

Nigeria were among other countries who announced their squads before last night's midnight deadline. Bora Milutinovic, their sixth coach since the last World Cup, said: "I have never had so many good players trying to make the team."

Leonardo Rocha, page 14

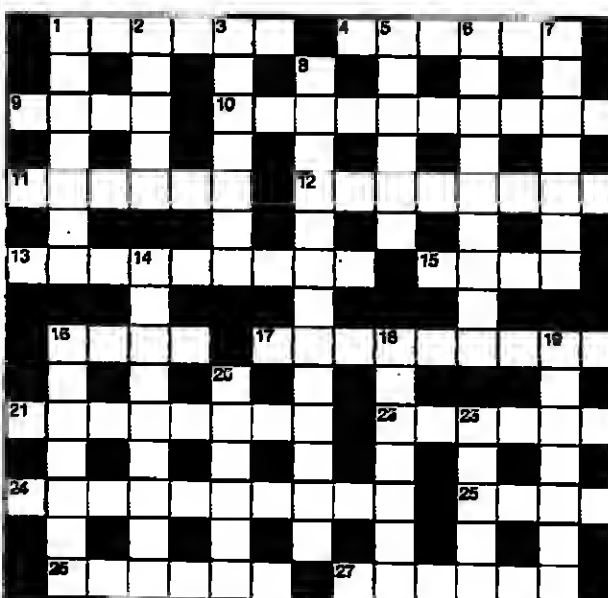


The suspicion is that Baddiel and Skinner's two basic jokes about footballers — bad haircuts and missed penalties — stretched over 16 shows will be spread Marmite-thin. Martin Keiner on the battle for World Cup viewers

G2 cover story

Guardian Crossword No 21,291

Set by Paul

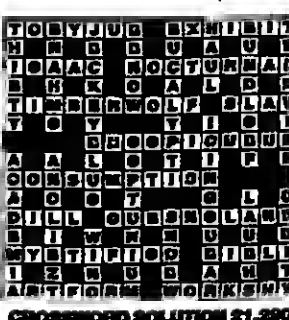


Across

- 1 Mum is spinning 16 across, perhaps (8)
- 4 To take on water, possibly, is sailor's sphere (8)
- 9 Cunning as a 16 down, perhaps (4)
- 10 Worryingly, poison present at a very high level (10)
- 11 I infer the Church is savage (8)
- 12 Cold in central Italy comes from northern England (8)
- 13 Silver girl gridlocked and upset (8)
- 15 Girl runs into another (4)
- 16 Secure, as wrapped in newspaper (4)
- 17 US military order for a fight at this front (5,4)
- 21 Furious if centre's vandalised (8)

Down

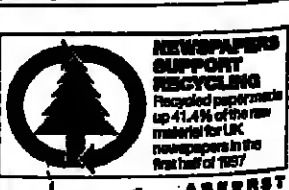
- 1 This produces noxious clouds suffocating those nearest, perhaps? (7)
- 2 Chicken skin, possibly? (5)
- 3 I've innate ingenuousness (7)
- 5 Broom, so Paul's after top half of body (5)
- 6 Partner of the King, Prince seized (5,4)
- 7 Nursery rhyme for money granted at school (7)



- 8 Glory of the short trouser? (13)
- 14 Smelly plant has awfully weird nose (8)
- 16 Many will die for a rich woman's warmth (3,4)
- 18 Shamefully mate with nun by mistake (7)
- 19 Longing to have corporal punishment without capital in South America (7)
- 20 Connects paper plates, petals or plants, possibly? (6)
- 23 Capitalist managed to keep order (5)

Solution tomorrow

21 Stuck? Then call our solutions line on 0800 333 222. Calls cost 50p per minute at all times. Service supplied by AT&T.



صكنا من الالاحل